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Independent analysis of politics and government

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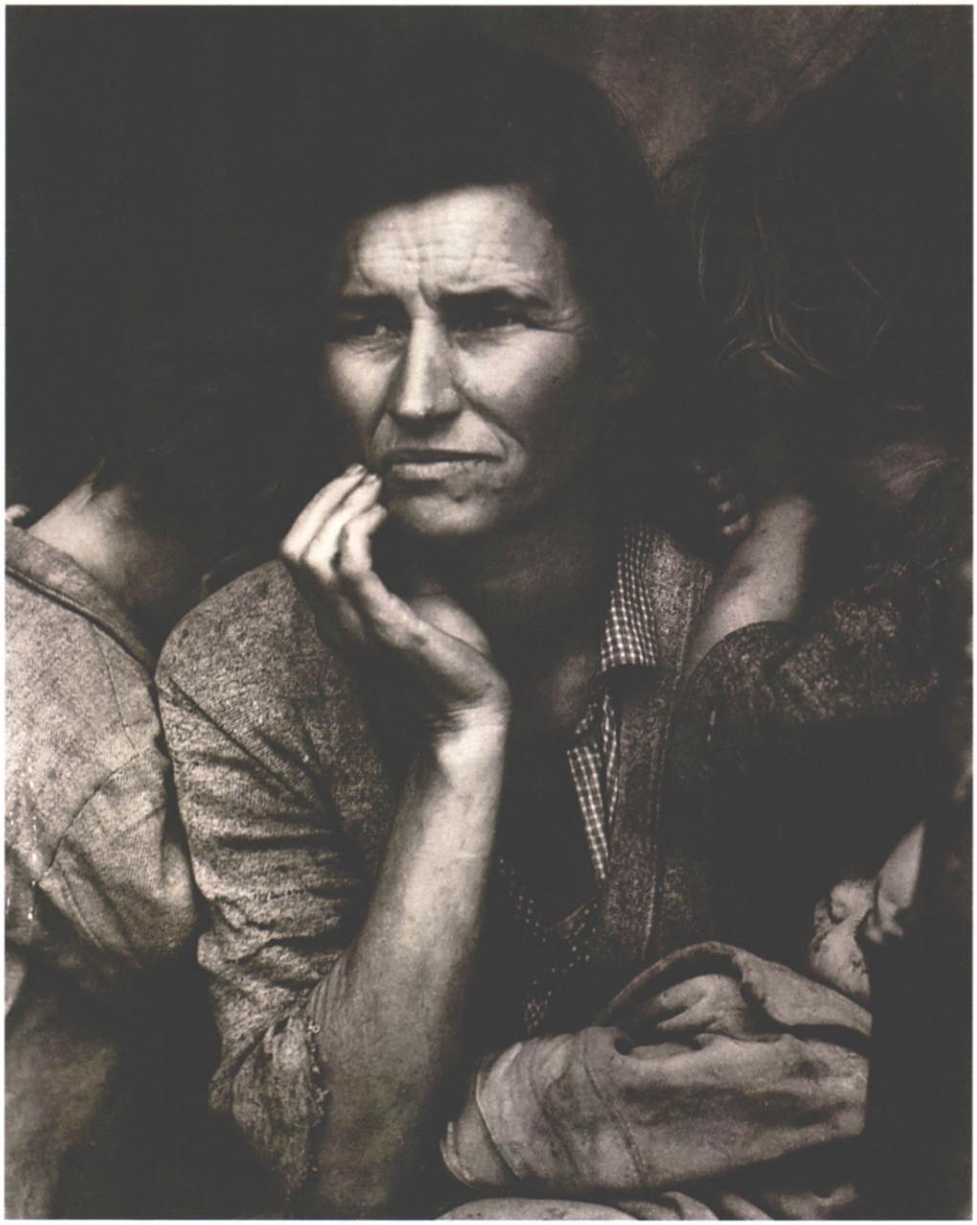

Inside:

Pete Wilson's travails
Politics of recall

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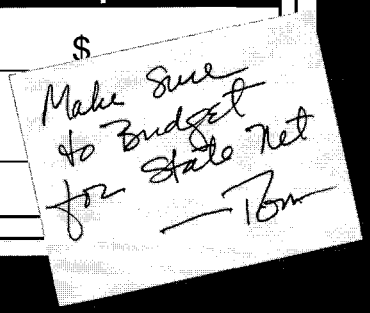
Budget Essentials...

Budget FY 1995-96		June 30, 1995
Department: Legislative Unit **Program:** Legislative Analysis and Reporting **Budget Code:** 12345-6789		
Item	**Description**	**Expense**
LEG-012344	Data Entry	$
LEG-012345	STATE NET Legislative Reporting Service	
LEG-012346	Outside Printing	



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JULY 1995
VOLUME XXVI, NUMBER 7

California JOURNAL

Independent analysis of politics and government

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As an ongoing feature of our 25th Anniversary year, the *Journal* will present issues of importance to California's future. This month, we focus on those at the bottom of the state's economic scale.

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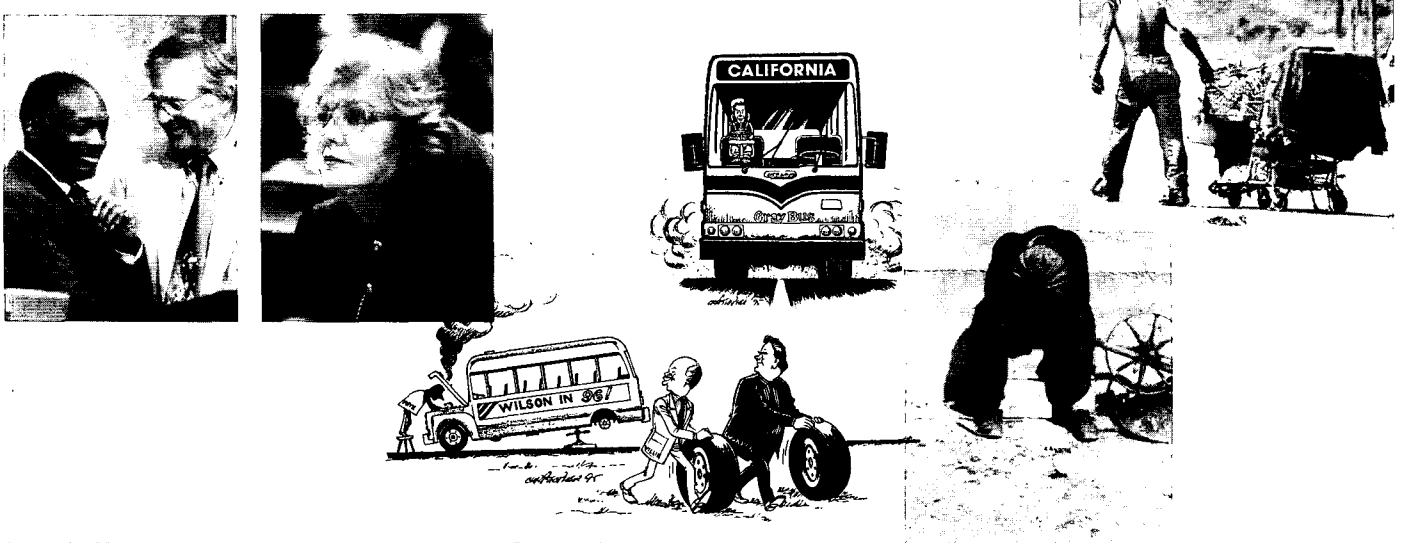

Cover: Migrant mother (1935) by Dorothea Lange. Courtesy of the Oakland Museum. Dorothea Lange (1895-1965) began her career as a commercial photographer in San Francisco in the 1920s. Lange's most enduring work was produced during the Great Depression, when she took her camera to the streets of San Francisco to capture images of the down-and-out, and later, when she documented the migration of farm families to the West in 1935. She also documented the forced relocation of Japanese-Americans during World War II.

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Up Front

UMBRAGE

That Was Then Award. From this point forward, we're renaming this little award in honor of the politician who has raised "that was then" to an art form — Governor Pete Wilson. Never mind his promise to serve out a full term as governor. Last month, Wilson went begging to the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board, seeking a change in a rule that prohibits securities dealers who handle state and municipal bonds from contributing to Wilson's fledgling presidential campaign. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the rule was adopted in 1994 over concerns that the bond business could be corrupted if industry officials were allowed to contribute money to those who award bond contracts. Wilson's campaign insisted that it was at a disadvantage if it couldn't collect from bond traders because Wilson's GOP presidential rivals — federal officeholders and talk-show hosts — have no such prohibition. Wilson received a mixed ruling from the board. On one hand, he was allowed to accept contributions; on the other hand, he was limited to $250 donations — far below the $1000 per head normally allowed. And where was Wilson a year ago on this issue? Yelping his head off and complaining that his 1994 gubernatorial opponent — then-Democratic state Treasurer Kathleen Brown — was taking heaps of money from this very same bond industry. But, hey (all together now), *"that was then."*

Trimming government. Say, isn't Senator Maurice Johannessen (R-Redding) one of those super-conservatives who thinks government is too intrusive and wastes too much time and effort on unnecessary activities? Well, Johnannessen has sponsored SB 1258, which exempts motorists from being cited or convicted for unintentionally hitting any animal with a motor vehicle. Only one problem. The act doesn't appear to be illegal. Nor could the author provide one instance of a driver being cited or convicted for accidentally mooshing an animal. Better safe than sorry, argued Johannessen during a hearing before the Senate Natural Resources and Wildlife Committee. Apparently, the committee agreed, and SB 1258 is headed for the floor.

Breast-in. It certainly wasn't the rowdiest public gathering in Capitol Park, but it may have been one of the most unusual: a rally in support of AB 157 — the measure by Assemblyman Antonio Villaraigosa (D-Los Angeles) that would have allowed women to breast feed their babies in public without fear of harrassment. On scene: a group of about 35 women, babes in tow, who descended on the Capitol environs to offer a meal to their children and lobby legislators. Said one of the moms, "How would you like to eat your lunch in the bathroom?" — a reference to the fact that many mothers are forced to retire to an out-of-the-way locale to breast feed their children. But some business groups quietly opposed Villaraigosa's effort because it condoned behavior that could embarrass other customers and patrons. And then there was Assemblyman Bill Morrow (R-Oceanside), who worried aloud in a hearing before Assembly Judiciary whether AB 157 might lead to widespread public nudity. The bill went down in committee; 7-2 on its initial vote and 7-4 on reconsideration. It needed eight votes to pass.

Mainstreaming. Now that it doesn't matter anymore, deposed Assemblyman Paul Horcher (D-R-I-Diamond Bar) has re-registered as a Democrat. "I used to feel Democrats weren't in the mainstream, but I think that's changing," he told his hometown paper, the *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin* the day after his May 16 ouster. Uh, earth to Horcher: The 1994 elections seemed to demonstrate otherwise. Meanwhile, Horcher's switch marks a homecoming of sorts; he was a Democrat until 1980.

Positioning. Old legislators never die ... they don't even fade away. Comes now former Assemblyman Rusty Areias (D-Salinas), defeated in 1994 in the Democratic primary for state controller. Areias, who "retired" to the family farm after his primary loss, last week got himself appointed to the California Coastal Commission. The appointment was made by Senate President pro Tempore Bill Lockyer (D-Hayward), who is counting on Areias to be a strong Democratic candidate for state Senate next year. It is expected that Areias will run for the seat being vacated by Senator Henry Mello (D-Watsonville), a victim of term limits. Mello's 15th District includes Assembly districts now represented by a pair of Republicans — Bruce McPherson of Santa Cruz and Peter Frusetta of San Benito. McPherson reports that he too, plans to run for Mello's Senate seat.

Recalls justified. Flushed with success over their recall of renegade Assemblyman Paul Horcher (I-Diamond Bar), Republicans now have turned their sights on Assemblyman Mike Machado (D-Linden). And their rationale? Machado misled voters last year when he said he would be an independent voice in Sacramento and, therefore, not be beholden to then-Assembly Speaker Willie Brown Jr. But what did Machado do the minute he landed in the Assembly, wail Republicans like Assemblyman Larry Bowler (R-Elk Grove)? Why, the crumb voted for Brown for speaker. So, it's off with his head for breaking a promise, decrees Bowler, who is active in the campaign to dump Machado. We assume Bowler's next target, after he has dispatched Machado to the political ash heap, is Governor Pete Wilson. After all, Wilson promised not to run for president and to serve out his full second term.

"The secret of managing is to keep the five guys who hate you away from the five who are undecided."

— Casey Stengel

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Two Cents Worth

COMMENTARY

Governing like the Marx Brothers

California government has gone Hollywood — vintage 1933 — and to honor this new spirit, we present for your entertainment a triple feature:

In the first film, "You Can't Cheat an Honest Man," Governor Pete Wilson, in the manner of W.C. Fields, takes on the role of Larson E. Whipsnade. He's the consumate con man, adrift at the head of a traveling circus and beset by a myriad of problems. He's got a good home in the West, with a family that needs him, but he's able to snooker them with Quixotic dreams of riches in places like New Hampshire and Iowa. Success is just around the corner — if he can keep to his quest. Never mind that he promised to stay at home. Never mind that creditors are howling outside the family's door, that his health insurance has been cancelled, that the neighborhood schoolhouse is crumbling, that his eldest heir is poised to cause mischief. Whipsnade can lead his circus and solve the family's problems, too, because he's a walleyed juggler who can see in two directions at once. Along the way, he loses his voice. Meanwhile, the circus is funded by rich neighbors, and throughout the film, Whipsnade snatches coins from a blind man and flips them to his backers. It's hilarious theater.

A reviewer comments: "There isn't so much of a story, but so many funny things happen that you're likely to overlook the lack of it."

In the second feature, the Assembly stars in an epic directed by Mack Sennett. The Republicans have been cast as the Keystone Kops, dressed up in their little blue outfits, with their shiny badges and rounded hats. They are supposed to deliver the Holy Grail to the chief Kops, played by Larry Bowler and Jim Brulte after the fashion of Laurel and Hardy. But GOP plans are foiled by the czar of the Grail — Otis P. Driftwood, played by Willie Brown Jr. in the spirit of Groucho Marx. Armed with little more than guile, chutzpah and a penchant for stretching the truth like an overworked rubberband, Driftwood repeatedly snatches back the prize. "Uh, uh, uh. You didn't say, 'Captain, may I?'" is his favorite razz. Along the way, he entices his rivals into riotous gaffes and pratfalls and has them running in so many directions at once that the screen is filled with colliding Kops.

By the end, the Kops are so bamboozled, frustrated and paranoid that they start shooting at one another. In the final act, Driftwood lures the Kops in front of a train. After the dust settles, he grows bored with the Grail and nonchalantly hands it off to one of the Kops. But not to the chief Kop. Instead he drops it into the lap of a Kop named Alice, who has been winged in the melee and bruised in the train wreck. She hails from Wonderland and is played by Doris Allen, in the style of Gracie Allen. At this point, Driftwood and Alice join in a unforgettable duet: "Just Wait 'til I Get Through With It."

The Democrats star as the rest of the Marx Brothers. They cavort throughout the film, aiding Groucho in his deviltry and stealing anything that isn't nailed down. In one memorable scene, a Kop catches The Professor, played by Phil Isenberg *a la* Harpo, in the act of pilfering. Instead of arresting him, however, the Kop tries to lecture The Professor on the virtues of bipartisan cooperation, all the while shaking his hand. But with each shake, fistfuls of Republican committee chairmanships drain out of The Professor's sleeves and coat and crash to the floor.

It's too hilarious for words.

The third film spotlights the Senate in a short-subject documentary about farming in the Dust Bowl. A small army of determined senators plods through arid fields, sowing seeds, watering plants, pulling weeds, cultivating scrawny crops and harvesting a meager supply of fruit and vegetables. It's boring and really not worth our time.

This triple feature isn't fantasy. California government has become a colossal joke, a running sight gag that could have been scripted by S.J. Perelman after several nights at the bottom of a barrel of Bushmills. It is a *montage* of pratfalls, backroom chicaneries, comic chases, blustery pomposity, florid denunciations, baldface lies and stretched ambitions. Unfortunately, it has been booked into a theater that is crumbling and on fire.

— A.G. Block

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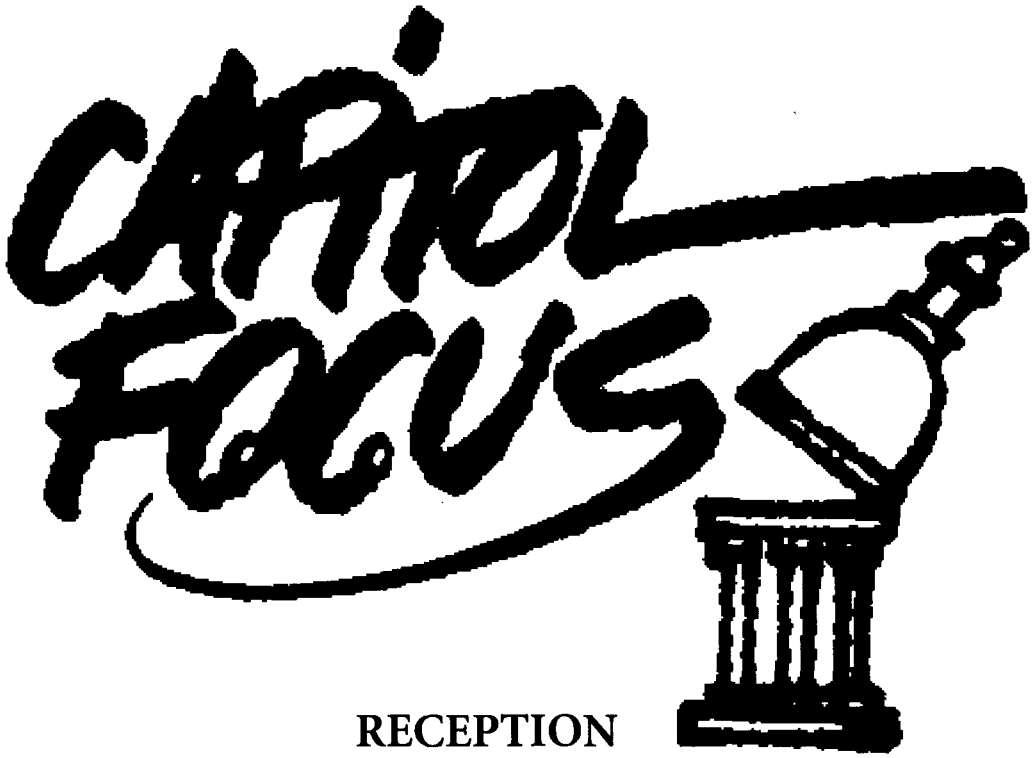

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Rostrum
LETTERS

Tort reform

I was disappointed to discover that you are perpetuating the Republican and right-wing myth that Stella Liebeck "scalded herself trying to balance a cup of coffee while driving" (see "Tort reform," *CJ*, June 1995). In fact, she spilled the coffee while sitting behind the wheel of her stationary car, which was parked in the McDonald's parking lot. You also fail to mention that she suffered third-degree burns to her groin, inner thighs, and buttocks, spent seven days in the hospital, was treated with skin grafts, and initially sought only payment for her medical bills but McDonalds refused to negotiate. To your credit, you do include the information that McDonald's knew about 700 other cases of severe burns. The correct information appeared in an article in *EXTRA!*, published by FAIR.

STEVE CHESSIN
Mountain View

Forests

Regarding Donn Zea's "Soapbox" (see *CJ*, June 1995), the closing of lumber mills in the so-called owl region of Northern California was inevitable because of declines in the availability of easily accessible, profitable timber. Mr. Zea encourages the mistaken presumption that the closures were the result of the owl controversy. The measures taken to prevent further declines in owl habitat did indeed come first, but priority in time does not prove causality. The indicator species for timber country is the health and prosperity of the human and natural communities that depend on the industry, not the owl. The health and welfare of logging communities has always been precarious. Timber companies have never had a strong record in building stable, sustainable economies in the United States, and I find it amusing when an industry spokesperson complains about environmental special interests betraying the timber region. If there is a self-serving, pocket-lining special interest at work in the woods, it is hardly environmentalists, who profit not at all from protecting forests. Perhaps the California Forestry Association hopes to avoid blame for their greed and betrayal of professional ideals if they can lay off the problem of exhausted and unprofitable timber supplies on owls and environmentalists. There is no harm done to the forest by delaying harvest of the pathetic remnants of merchantable material. Timber does not stop growing just because it is not cut, and fires in natural stands didn't prevent an incredible timber supply from developing before the industry arose. The timber industry is vulnerable to extinction unless it evolves. North Coast mills closed because old growth was practically gone, and regrowth wasn't as quick as forecast, and the mills were inefficient because there was little effort by the industry to upgrade their facilities and adapt them to second growth. National Forest operations in most of the Sierra consume more tax money than they yield in local redistributions. As a citizen and taxpayer, I am outraged that the North Coast and Sierra private and public forests have been irresponsibly managed, damaging the people who counted on the industry as well as public resources. I am furious that the industry seeks to make environmental concerns the scapegoat for their professional malfeasance.

EARLE W. CUMMINGS

Wind makers

Your article on political public-relations firms (see "Wind makers," *CJ*, June 1995) was interesting and raised some valid points. One item, however, was missing: Many of the public affairs firms in Sacramento work very hard at being bipartisan and placing more emphasis on the governmental process than on individual politicians. We all take great pride in fully understanding the complex issues on which we work and then developing strategies based on the grasp of the process. Our firm, for example, is anything but a "Democratic" firm. Partner Alan Ziegaus served as senior counselor to Governor Pete Wilson's recent re-election campaign and remains a trusted friend. In addition, we have recently announced that Joe Shumate, the governor's former deputy chief and current campaign consultant, has joined the firm effective June 1, 1995. Joe also served as campaign director for Secretary of State Bill Jones and Insurance Commissioner Chuck Quackenbush.

BOBBIE METZGER
Partner
Stoorza, Zeigaus, Metzger & Hunt
Sacramento

Guns

"Two Cents Worth" voiced a concern heard repeatedly in the right-to-carry-firearms debates of other states: Can citizens be trusted to have and use lethal force for lawful purposes? One-half of the states now have given an affirmative answer to that question and have passed "shall issue" or nondiscretionary laws allowing law-abiding citizens to carry concealed weapons. The uniform experience of those states is that homicide rates did not increase after enactment of these laws, despite the initial worries of opponents. The law-abiding citizen is a mature and responsible citizen. He or she is not a rarity and is easily distinguished from the reckless or criminal person by a notable lack of brushes with the law. He or she has the moral judgment to not use lethal force in a traffic dispute or against a political opponent. This citizen can be trusted. California should learn from the states that have pioneered right-to-carry laws and should pass its own soon. Let us govern not with the turmoil of emotion but with the wisdom of experience.

DR. TIMOTHY WHEELER
Upland

The thesis of this commentary is that human beings would rather kill than breathe, and that World War I and World War II prove it. First, the notion that a runaway arms race caused World War I

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or II is not generally considered realistic by most historians. Wars are caused by social, economic and moral failings of the power elite of the countries involved, and weapons will be built to kill as many of the young men those elite feel comfortable sacrificing to "national interests." What relationship the causes of war may have to ordinary people is also a matter of conjecture. The notion that armed people in "must grant" states are somehow more violent than those in more restrained states is nonsense. None of the 22 states with such laws has experienced an increase in violence or crime after adopting such laws. Nor have permit holders represented a problem in any of these states. In Florida, for example, violent crime has dropped by 46 percent and murder by 21 percent since passage of the law (liberalizing the carrying of concealed weapons). The fact that other states with similar laws have an average violent crime rate 40 percent less than 28 "discretionary" states seems to support this. The notion that ordinary citizens are just a gun away from being murdering felons is silly. Just look at one example cited in the column — that of conflicts between sheriffs and deputy sheriffs. Both sides are armed to the teeth with riot guns, automatic weapons and side arms, but they don't seem to be shooting each other. One-third to one-half of the households in America have guns, and the vast majority have not experienced an increase in violent crime. The basic issue isn't whether humans can be violent or not, it is whether the society as a whole should allow or even encourage self-defense against violent criminals. The answer isn't just philosophical since self-defense incurs risk of death or injury. People should be able to choose the least risky alternatives.

ROBERT A. DAY
Livermore

Concerning the June "Two Cents" column, I recognize that the only thing that is ever likely to make you believe that the government cannot protect you and that you are, in the end, responsible for your own protection is for something massive and unpleasant to happen to you. That is, of course, statistically unlikely even in our society. I am bothered by your notion that Florida has been lucky in the seven years since it broadened its concealed-weapons permit laws because its streets have not run with blood. It is impossible for a person, or even a small group of people, to have a seven-year run of "luck." The logical, reasonable answer is that persons who seek to carry weapons legally tend to be honest, competent, reasonably bright and responsible people and not hair-trigger borderline psychotics. Is it possible that Florida's success is due to the fact that there is no significant societal danger in arming the good guys? The bad guys can't get permits; the chronic drunks, wackos, and assorted social misfits won't bother. What is the harm in admitting that the program seems to have worked in Florida, which is why it has been adopted elsewhere?

ROBERT R. WALSH
Stockton

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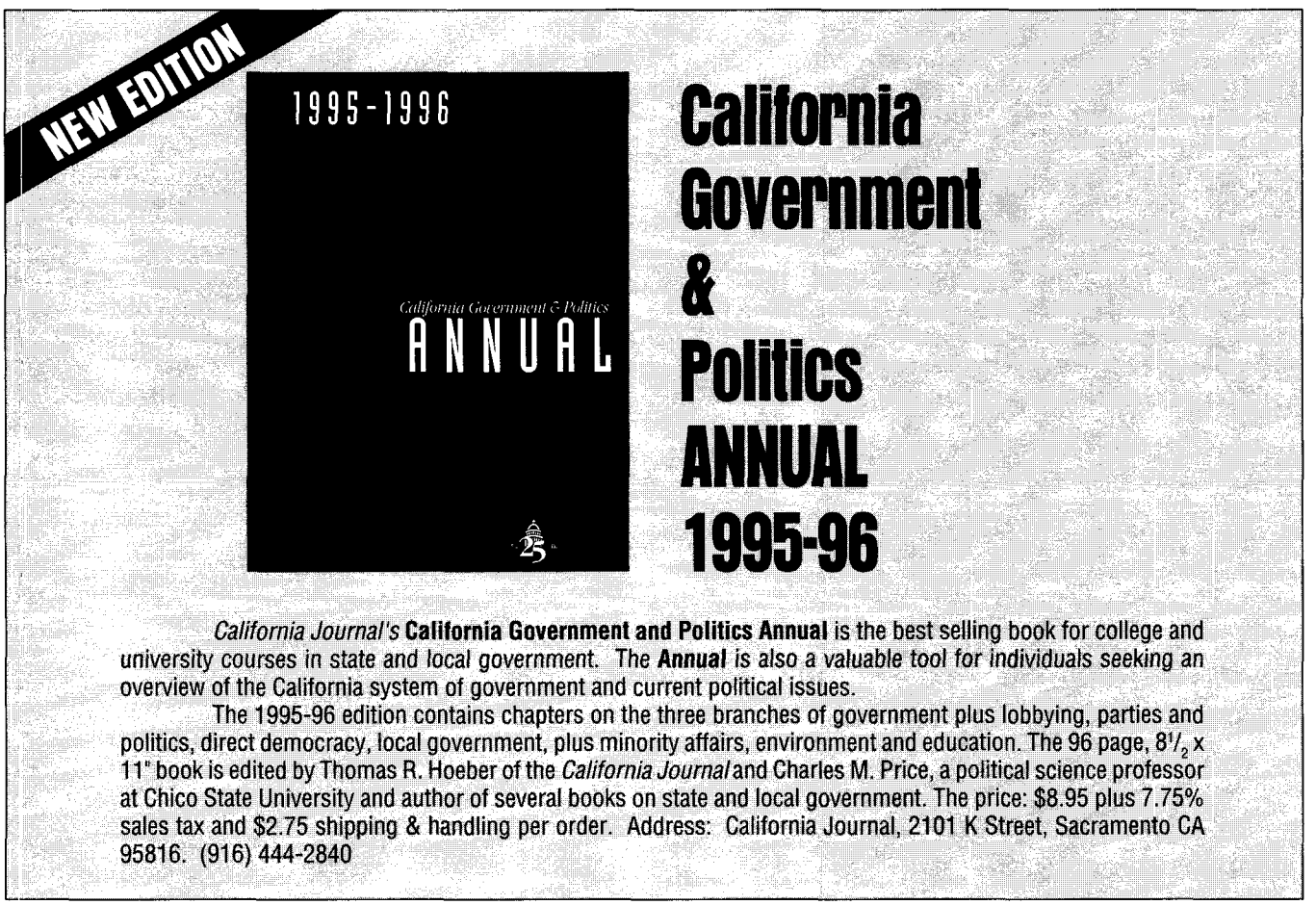
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The Bottom Line

GOVERNMENT FINANCE

By Susan Rasky

Balancing act

Representative Robert Livingston, the Louisiana Republican who chairs the House Appropriations Committee, has a firm retort for critics who warn that the federal government will come apart under the weight of GOP budget balancing plans.

"It's not coming apart," he says. "What we're doing is what the American people want. And we will do it."

A good thing that Livingston is so certain about what Americans want. It is his committee, and its Senate counterpart, where most of the fiscal carnage is going to occur in the next few months. Less certain is whether Americans, who have adopted the federal deficit as a powerful cultural symbol for all that ails the country, are prepared to discover that balancing the budget in Washington is not its own reward.

The *federal* government may not come apart if it shrinks as much as Livingston and his GOP colleagues envision, but what happens at the state and local government levels once Congress completes its handiwork is another matter altogether. For all the publicity about proposed cutbacks in high visibility entitlement programs such as Medicare and Medicaid, it is discretionary spending — the roughly one-third of the federal budget directly controlled by the congressional appropriations committees — that takes the biggest hit in the multi-year budget blueprint lawmakers have approved.

Discretionary spending is everything from the Pentagon's tanks and bombers to public housing, space exploration, education, highway programs, meat inspection, cancer research and the FBI. The budget plan would hit Pentagon spending to some extent by holding defense expenditure increases to a level lower than the rate of inflation over the next seven years.

But the brunt of the discretionary cuts, the real spending reductions, will come in domestic programs, many of them specifically designed to be counter-cyclical. Such complex economic notions of course will be passe in the brave new world of balanced budgets because, as every American surely knows by now, running a central government is exactly the same as reconciling the family checkbook.

During the best of economic times major cutbacks at the federal level would be problematic for cities and counties in California, where a convoluted state revenue structure and a plethora of catch-22 spending limitations at every level of government make a mockery of fiscal planning. And these are hardly the best of economic times for local governments now scrambling to put finishing touches on budgets that will be out of balance as soon as they are written.

According to the State Board of Equalization, assessed property values statewide increased by 1.3 percent for the 1994-95 fiscal year, following a rise of only 2.6 percent in the previous fiscal year. Four of the state's 58 counties – Kern, Orange, Riverside and San Francisco – showed actual declines in assessed property values, and among the 10 largest counties, the biggest increase was an anemic 3 percent in Alameda. In Los Angeles County, which accounts for about a quarter of the property tax rolls, assessed values rose by just 1.3 percent.

Sales tax revenues, a primary source of funding for cities, increased by roughly 4.5 percent statewide in 1994 as the state began to pull out of the recession. But that increase does not come close to making up the decline in sales tax revenue over the previous four years. For 1995, the Department of Finance is projecting that revenues from sales taxes will rise by 3.9 percent, a figure that could decline further if the slowdown in the national economy tips California back into recession.

The practical results of such revenue shortfalls — cuts in general assistance or medical services to the needy — are manifested daily in the headlines of newspapers throughout the state. But two random examples suggest the breadth of what might be called "middle class services" that are being affected at both the city and county level:

- In the city of San Diego, budget plans call for elimination of 39 fire department positions, lifeguard coverage at a popular beach, closure of the city attorney's consumer–fraud unit, closure of 31 of the city's 66 after-school playground sites and a boost in fees of sewer ratepayers to upgrade the city's storm-drain system.
- In Alameda County, where officials are trying to close a $77 million budget gap, the county administrator has proposed elimination of staffing for nine of the 19 civil superior courts, elimination of 15 court commissioners and referees who hear traffic and family law cases, huge reductions in general assistance welfare payments, major reductions in mental health programs for the poor, closures of halfway houses and homeless shelters and cutting the county's 40 public health nurses to about half that number.

"We're talking about triage here," says Dan Wall, who handles tax lobbying for the California State Association of Counties. "We're ignoring our municipal services to take care of the social welfare, health and justice functions mandated by the state or the Feds. I don't know what happens to the coroner's office or the bureau of weights and measures or animal control. One of the biggest difficulties in the counties right now is the backlog of appeals on property tax assessments. Do we cut those staffs?"

Because preliminary city and county budgets for the upcoming fiscal year must be in place by July 1st, most localities are expecting to have to reopen their budgets at least once and perhaps twice to adjust for further cuts that will be dictated by budget actions in Sacramento and Washington. In theory, counties have until October 3rd to make final decisions, but as Wall points out, delaying that long means compressing the eventual cuts into a shorter time frame and thus making them more painful.

Given the massive amount of cutting and reassmbling anticipated in Washington, it could easily be January of 1996 before local governments in California can factor in the impact of Federal spending reductions that Congressman Livingston correctly describes as "what the American people want."

Alas, neither the Republican nor Democratic politicians who made balancing the federal budget a moral crusade over the past two decades bothered to explain the pesky details.

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Trouble on the

Was it something I said in another life?
I try and try, but nothing comes out right for me.
Bad Karma, killing me by degrees.

— Warren Zevon

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home front

Presidential aspirations don't help Wilson's policy agenda

by Steve Scott

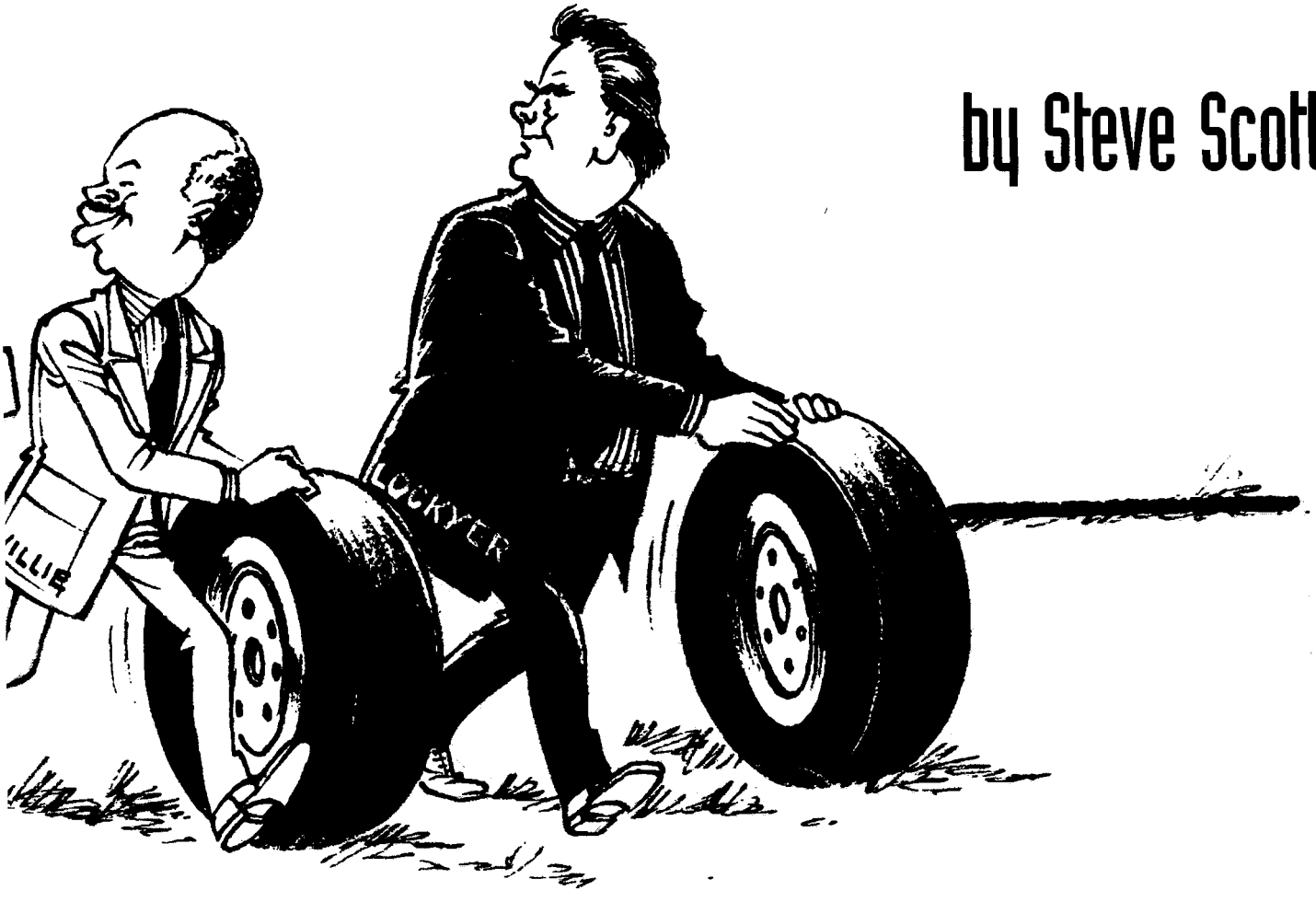

Illustration by Christopher

Although he has attended church, never misses a prayer breakfast, and no doubt believes in a higher power, Governor Pete Wilson has never been known as a particularly spiritual guy. His public persona is more Marine than mystic. In recent weeks, however, Wilson may have had occasion to wonder if somebody up there doesn't have it in for him. Since his April announcement that he's a likely candidate for president, California's upwardly-mobile chief executive has seen his poll numbers drop, his fund-raising fizzle, and his past employment of an illegal housekeeper turned into a public fiasco. Even his body is conspiring against him, as the lingering effects of

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throat surgery in April have prevented him from using his own voice, either to defend himself or to raise money.

Whether you call it karma, kismet, or luck, Wilson's has been almost all bad.

While the problems facing Wilson, the candidate, are bad enough, they are nothing compared with the setbacks suffered in recent weeks by Wilson, the governor. As 1995 neared the halfway mark, most of the agenda outlined by Wilson in his State of the State message have been shot down or sidetracked by the state Legislature. The litany of Wilson priorities killed or derailed in Senate or Assembly committees includes an extensive package of tort-liability reforms, state-local government realignment, college-fee increases, welfare cuts, expansion of enterprise zones, and the death penalty for drive-by shooters. Perhaps most importantly, legislative Democrats gave no indication they would approve Wilson's proposed 15 percent across-the-board income tax cut, widely seen as a crucial in neutralizing an issue against him in the upcoming campaign.

Of course, the Legislature is still only in the first half of a two-year session, and most of the early committee votes have fallen strictly along party lines. Early defeats are often turned around either through leadership negotiations or under public pressure, and Wilson Press Secretary Sean Walsh describes the problems as "temporary setbacks." Still, Wilson's presidential ambitions make any sign of weakness at home an issue for his rivals and grist for the pundit mill. In order to achieve even modest policy success, Wilson must master a sort of legislative arcade game. Get past one dangerous enemy, and another appears on the screen, equally capable of shooting him down. While he certainly can afford to lose a few planes, if he gets shot down too often, Wilson's presidential screen could flash, "Campaign Over."

"To the degree that this would become something that the national press would take note of, it could become a problem," said veteran Republican strategist Tony Quinn. "[President Bill] Clinton aside, sitting governors have not done very well in presidential politics because they get bogged down in home state politics."

Political volatility in the Legislature has certainly been a major factor in the problems Wilson has faced. The state Assembly has been racked by leadership strife since December, when Republicans saw their prospective speakership snatched away by the defection of then-Assemblyman Paul Horcher (I-Diamond Bar). The subsequent expulsion of dual-officeholder Richard Mountjoy (R-Monrovia) and re-election of then-Assembly Speaker Willie L. Brown Jr. (D-San Francisco) resulted in committees split right down the middle. Some of Wilson's most important policy prescriptions, most notably his entire tort-reform agenda, were killed in Assembly committees when they fell a single vote short of the majorities needed. The situation is even worse for Wilson in the Senate, where Democrats hold a narrow, but effective majority. Despite an occasional defection on specific issues, the Democrats have managed to hold their majority against most of Wilson's proposals.

"Politically, this place is very volatile – more so than in any year that I remember," said Senator Mike Thompson (D-St. Helena). "Add to that the fact that the governor has his eye on another ball, and it doesn't make it very easy."

As difficult as the situation is on the natural, Wilson's

critics say he adds to his problems by taking a dismissive approach to the Legislature. Before the budget conference committee had even begun its deliberations, the administration was already sending out layoff notices to state workers predicated on complete legislative agreement with his proposed cuts. Thompson says the administration presented its realignment plan to his budget subcommittee as a "take it or leave it" proposition. "You don't even begin in a positive light when that happens," he said. Among Assembly Democrats, Wilson may have also added to his woes with his active, visible participation in the eventual recall of Horcher, and suspicions that he might provide help to other recalls launched against legislative Democrats (see page 16).

"Wilson has dug himself a grave," said Brown. "He's made it very difficult for his ... programs to ever be enacted into law."

As if problems with Democrats weren't bad enough, Wilson must also contend with an increasingly rambunctious collection of legislative Republicans. At least 20 members of the Legislature, including a majority of the Senate Republican caucus, have publicly come out in support of one of Wilson's presidential rivals, U.S. Senator Phil Gramm (R-Texas). "The 'Gramm Caucus' has no reason to help Wilson," said one Republican.

Wilson's allies in the Legislature dismiss the impact of presidential politics on what happens underneath the Capitol dome. Assembly Republican Leader Jim Brulte (R-Rancho Cucamonga), who has managed to keep the number of open Gramm defectors to a minimum in his caucus, believes Wilson has an opportunity to build support among the 20-member freshman class.

"Most of the people who were really vocal against Wilson are no longer in the caucus," said Brulte. "Eighteen [freshmen] were elected with him at the top of the ticket, and most give him at least some credit for their victory."

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Not everyone is as sanguine about the malleability of the newcomers. Many of the new arrivals are fierce conservatives with no great love for Wilson's reputation as a pragmatic politician. Freshman Assemblyman Charles Poochigian (R-Fresno), a former Wilson staffer, says the relationship between the administration and the GOP caucus is "professional," but he also notes "a heightened degree of independence" among his classmates.

"These people are not automatons," said Poochigian. "You'll see a lot of people being critical on the budget."

Ah, yes, the budget. An arcade game all by itself. As of mid June, the Kabuki theater that is the annual state budget process was still in the sabre-rattling stage, but most predicted a difficult budget year. With the Assembly at a virtual standstill, the Senate figures to view itself as the place where "the loyal opposition" would make its strongest stand. Assembly Democrats facing imminent minority status, meanwhile, were believed to have no real incentive to vote for Wilson's conservative budget, let alone his proposed tax cut. Whether they were optimistic or pessimistic about the budget fight to come, however, most observers agree on one point: A successful budget is critical to positioning Wilson as a "can-do" candidate. And even if he gets past the budget battle unscathed, another potential hydrogen bomb lurks in Orange County, where bankruptcy looms if voters do not approve an emergency hike in the sales tax.

"If you're running as a Republican governor [who's] going to get things done, you've got to get things done," said GOP strategist Quinn. "It isn't good enough to say, 'I kept disasters from happening.'"

Some of the problems with the agenda were predicted by friend and foe alike to be an inevitable outgrowth of Wilson's presidential ambitions. Wilson's forays into presidential primary states have already given Democratic Lieutenant Governor Gray Davis more than 50 days as the acting chief executive. "Basically, [Wilson]'s an absentee landlord," said Davis' chief of staff Gary South. "It's almost impossible to push forward a legislative agenda when you're subjecting yourself to that kind of out-of-town schedule." That very point was at the center of early Republican criticism of Wilson's campaign by, among others, Senate Republican Leader Ken Maddy (R-Fresno). Still, even though he's been touched up for some losses in the Legislature, both the Wilson administration and the campaign dismiss the suggestion that Wilson's presidential campaign has, or will, affect his ability to push legislation.

"He's got a legislative staff that he's in touch with not just daily, but several times a day," said Wilson press secretary Walsh. "Just because you don't see the governor in the hallways [of the Capitol] doesn't mean he's not moving things forward."

As for the agenda itself, the Wilson forces believe they can turn the early defeats into victories, and are able to point to some early successes. Wilson's proposal to revamp the state education code is still alive, as are merit-pay, school construction, and anti-crime measures. "It hasn't been as bleak as some would like to portray it," maintained Walsh. Those agenda items which have gone down did so on straight party-line votes, which could be reversed, particularly if the GOP is able to gain a clear majority in the Assembly. Even if the worst happens, Wilson campaign spokesman Dan Schnur says the campaign can survive any Democratic attempts to block his agenda by pointing to past success on such issues as workers compensation reform.

"Obviously further legislative successes and progression on policy fronts yields an added benefit, but if it gets held up, we still have a pretty impressive record to point to on all of the major issues," said Schnur.

So what are the longer-term prospects for Wilson's policy agenda? A lot depends on the virtually "even-Steven" state Assembly. Wilson must navigate some choppy waters in the lower house, where every vote will count, before he can even get to where he can do battle with the stronger Senate Democrats and their leader, Senate President pro Tem Bill Lockyer (D-Hayward). Ironically, in putting the full weight of his campaign organization behind the recall of Paul Horcher, Wilson helped take out one of only a handful of Republicans who have consistently supported his budgets. Then there is Willie Brown who, speaker or not, will still wield significant influence particularly in light of his role in installing the new Republican speaker, Assemblywoman Doris Allen (R-Cypress). Brown has announced he is running for mayor of San Francisco, a city where you win points for making any Republican's life miserable. Some insiders believe Brown's own ambitions will give him an incentive to push against Wilson at every turn, especially at budget time.

Still, Wilson retains some important advantages which should keep him from having to leave his fate entirely in the hands of others. As governor, Wilson is able to move portions of his agenda by executive order, rather than through legislation. Last month, Wilson did just that with an executive order rolling back affirmative-action standards in state hiring. Since some of Wilson's proposals lost because of the divided committees, there is ample reason for Wilson to bide his time on the major policy issues until the GOP can take firm control of the Assembly which could happen if Brown is elected mayor of San Francisco. "If you've got a five-five committee on a bill, why not wait and go when the committee is readjusted," said one GOP source who asked not to be identified.

> "If you're running as a Republican governor [who's] going to get things done, you've got to get things done. It isn't good enough to say, I kept disasters from happening."
> — Tony Quinn

Even if the leadership situation remains in flux, Republicans argue they can still push Wilson's agenda with the help of swing Democrats. The governor has been getting help from San Joaquin Valley Democrats, such as Senator Jim Costa (D-Fresno) and Assemblyman Cruz Bustamante (D-Fresno) in his bid to restructure the state Endangered Species Act. "Republicans already have effective policy control of the Legislature," said one GOP lawmaker. Wilson administration and campaign officials agree, and some suggest that, if the proposals come around again next year, their passage would be a bigger boost in the election year itself than in the year preceding it.

And, as any candidate will tell you, election years are the best time to have your karma running smoothly.

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Allen wins, Willie grins

Democrats install GOP defector as first woman Assembly speaker

by Steve Scott

Considering how difficult Willie Lewis Brown Jr. made their lives over the course of his 14 years as Assembly speaker, June 5th should have been Independence Day for Assembly Republicans. Brown, whom many conservatives regard as Satan in an Armani suit, was finally making his exit as speaker. For the first time in a quarter century, a Republican was about to be elected to the Assembly's top leadership post. Yet, when their time came to address this monumental transition during floor debate, Assemblyman David Knowles (R-Cameron Park) had this to say: "This is junta government time. It's the law of the jungle."

Wait a minute. What's going on here? Willie Brown is out, and a Republican is in ... and a female Republican from Orange County, no less. What's not to like? As it turns out, plenty, not only for Assembly Republicans, but for Governor Pete Wilson, Democrats from marginal districts and, according to some, democratic governance in California.

Officially, Willie Brown's legislative title is no longer speaker, but rather Assembly minority leader. Orange County Assemblywoman Doris Allen (R-Cypress) was elected to the speakership June 5th by a 40-38 vote. It was Brown, however, who engineered Allen's victory over Assembly GOP Leader Jim Brulte (R-Rancho Cucamonga). It was also Brown who was instrumental in shoving through new rules reversing much of the power-sharing arrangement worked out after his surprise speakership victory in January. And it is Willie Brown who, despite being in the minority, will likely retain his dominance over the legislative process in the Assembly.

"If this were Bolivia, he would have used tanks," said one disgusted veteran of the Capitol wars.

The latest twist in this year's bizarre legislative leadership drama began unfolding in early May, when the 59-year-old Allen announced she was a candidate for speaker. Allen was angry with Brulte for allowing most of the Assembly Republican Caucus to back former Assemblyman Ross Johnson (R-Fullerton) over her in the special election for the Senate seat vacated by Orange County Supervisor Marian Bergeson. Shortly after her announcement, Allen stopped participating in GOP caucus meetings and spent most of her time in her district.

Photos by Rich Pedroncelli

Speaker Doris Allen

With the recall of former Assemblyman Paul Horcher a reality, and another Republican soon to fill a vacant seat, Brown's exit strategy quickly formed. Just before Memorial Day, he announced to his colleagues that he'd step aside as speaker "the minute you put together 40 votes." On June 3rd, Brown formally announced his candidacy for mayor of San Francisco. When morning broke on June 5th, it quickly was revealed that Assemblywoman Martha Escutia (D-Los Angeles) was in the Capitol. This was a key indicator, for Escutia

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Brown (left)

Brulte

had not attended session for a month as she prepared to give birth to her first child. That afternoon, Norwalk Democrat Grace Napolitano rose to nominate Allen as the Assembly's first woman speaker.

"This is a very historic day," said Napolitano. "Our actions will reverberate not only throughout the state, but also throughout the nation and, believe it, throughout the world."

Republicans insisted that Brulte, not Allen, was their chosen leader, and that Democrats had no right to give, in the words of Assemblyman Trice Harvey (R-Bakersfield), "Democrats their choice of who the speaker of this house should be out of our own caucus." When the roll was called, Allen's lone Republican vote was her own, and, after an appropriately-dramatic pause, Brown himself cast the deciding vote.

While Allen's election was maddening enough to Republicans, what happened next sent them into orbit. After electing Allen, Democrats and their new-found ally rammed through completely new rules. Gone were provisions giving the party caucuses control over their committee assignments, resources, and membership on the powerful Rules Committee. These decisions were now left in the hands of the speaker and the floor leader "of the other party." Democratic resources and committee assignments would still be determined by Brown, but Republicans would be chosen by Allen, rather than Brulte. The entire Republican leadership was frozen out of the decision-making process. The imperial speakership had returned, and there was even a spot for Willie Brown, as "speaker emeritus."

"This is not reform," snapped Assemblyman James Rogan (R-Glendale). "It's a step backward."

For her part, the new speaker chose to emphasize the historic nature of her ascension. "I think it's an acknowledgement ... of women's abilities, and their ability to lead and their ability to accomplish," she told a crush of reporters after her swearing-in. She denied that the rules constitute a return to an imperial speakership. "That's what we would have returned to had we gone the other direction," she said.

Most of her fellow Republicans, however, were not as forgiving. Brulte focused most of his criticism on the rules, vowing parliamentary challenges at every opportunity. "These rules impede our ability to make good public policy," he said. Other Republicans were less reserved in their attack, vowing retribution that one member described as "not scorched earth, but controlled burn."

"I'm a vote for guerrilla warfare," said Assemblyman Larry Bowler (R-Elk Grove). "To my mind, she is a Democratic speaker."

Despite the fire and brimstone, however, some Republicans hinted that they were ready to deal with Allen. Tres Pinos Republican Peter Frusetta, who has had his own disagreements with Brulte, spoke up after the vote to congratulate Allen. Maverick Assemblyman Bernie Richter (R-Chico), who backed away from his own renegade run for speaker earlier this year, indicated he was ready to give Allen his support. According to Democrats, Allen will have more Republicans on board once the impact of the rules sink in.

"She's got five Rules [Committee] appointments, and 12 committee chairs," noted Assemblyman Kevin Murray (D-Los Angeles). "I think she makes some friends real fast."

Escutia

Allen's rise to prominence comes as a surprise to many Capitol veterans. Like Horcher, Allen was considered suspect among some in her caucus because of her support for coastal environmental protection and the backing she gets from the California Teachers Association. Overall, she has been perceived as something of a back-bencher, ranking in the bottom 10 in *California Journal's* biennial survey of Capitol insiders. Those who know her personally, however, are not surprised she'd have the moxie to stare down the conservatives in her caucus and go her own way. One thing is certain. As Allen begins the difficult job of consolidating her leadership, she enjoys one advantage her fellow Republicans can't touch.

She has Willie Brown as her tutor.

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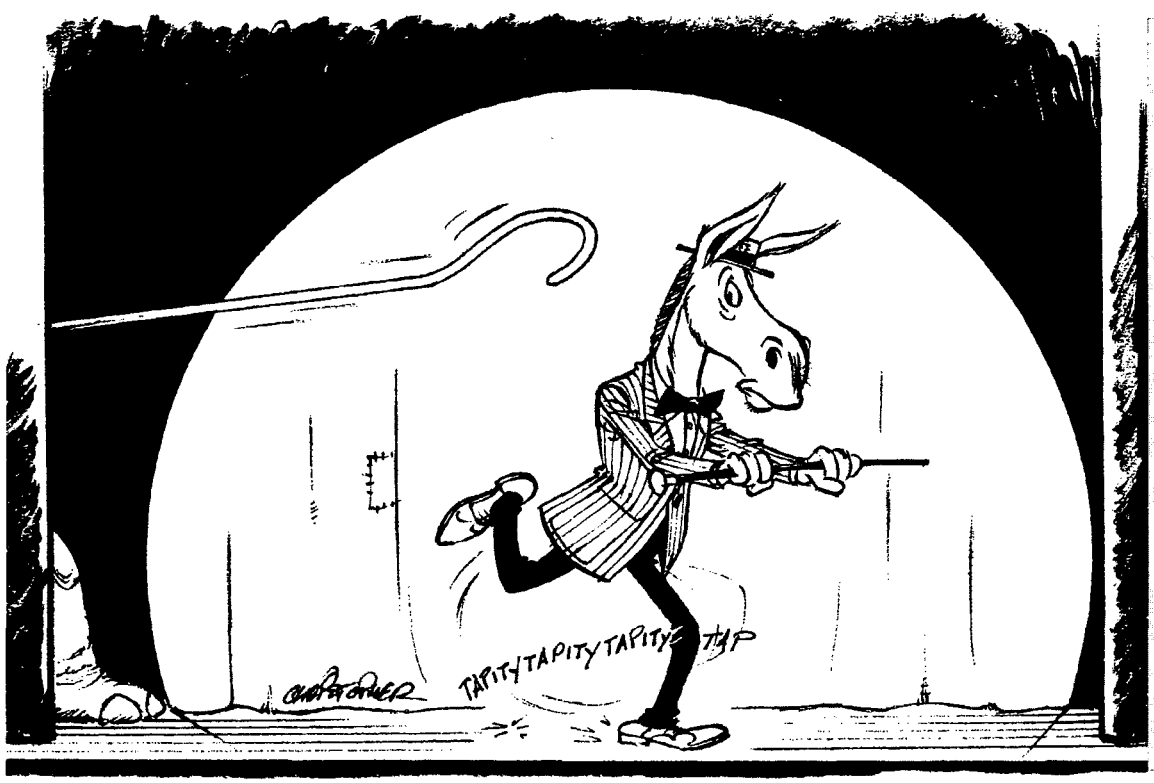
The politics of

Recall elections offer an avenue for immediate retribution against a political foe, but they also offer instability in government. Proponents of recalls say volatility is good. Others aren't so sure.

Growing up in New York, Phil Giarrizzo reminisced, the bullies on the block would demand a "do over" if the results of the game they were playing didn't turn out the way they wanted. It was plain unfair and ruined the integrity of the game. Years later, he was in Southern California as the political consultant who tried to defend Assemblyman Paul Horcher (I-Diamond Bar) from a recall attempt in the 60th Assembly District. To Giarrizzo, the bully Republicans were asking for a "do over."

With the historic May 16th recall election, Republicans engineered their "do over." Horcher's defection from the Republican party and pivotal vote for Assembly Speaker Willie Brown Jr. (D-San Francisco) sparked a rage in his district that was impossible to contain. Sixty-three percent of the voters favored his ouster, while only 37 percent wanted to retain him. He was immediately replaced by Republican Gary Miller — the highest vote-getter among those on a simultaneous ballot designed to pick Horcher's successor. Now, local Republicans in the San Joaquin Valley are trying to mount a recall of Assemblyman Michael Machado (D-Stockton), who won the 17th Assembly District seat by a razor-thin margin. If that works as planned, Assemblywoman Dede Alpert (D-



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recall

By Laureen Lazarovici

San Diego) may be the next target.

To supporters, recalls are the purest form of direct democracy. To opponents, they are being used as an instrument to sow electoral disorder. Are recalls poised to become the political trend of the '90s? Some hope they are; others fear they are.

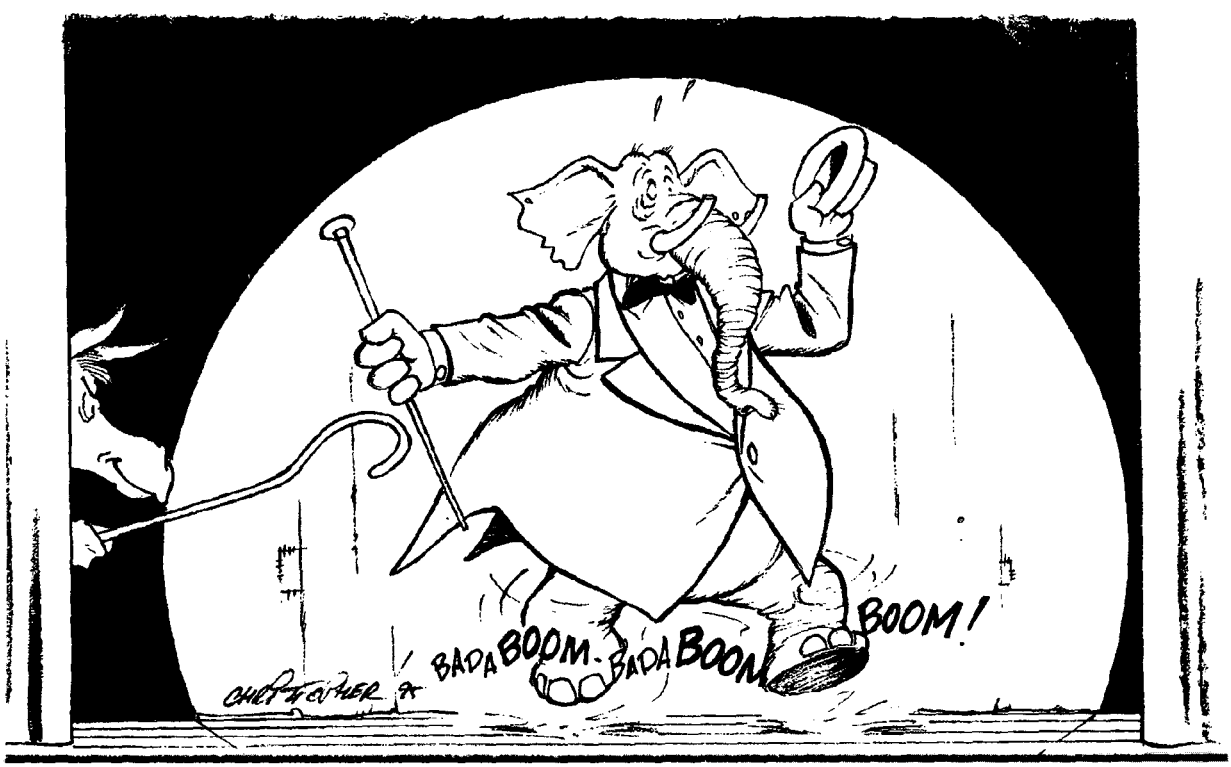
Last year, then-Senate President pro Tempore David Roberti (D-Van Nuys) beat back a recall sponsored by gun interests. That was one of only five recall attempts that have qualified for a vote since 1911. Of those, only two were successful — against Horcher, and against a San Francisco state senator, Edwin Grant, way back in 1914. In Grant's case, a local gun shop owner was angered by the lawmaker's attempts to shoo the call girls out of San Francisco's raunchy Barbary Coast district. Those Horcher enemies who derided the assemblyman as "Willie Whorcher" would probably argue that both recalls were about prostitution.

The visceral and emotional appeal of the Horcher recall was based on the belief that the two-term legislator had betrayed voters in his district. "Legislators sometimes do cast votes that are unpopular," said Assembly Republican Leader Jim Brulte (R-Rancho Cucamonga), whose speakership dreams were dashed last December by Horcher's vote. However, "Horcher conspired with Willie Brown to deceive the voters," he said, referring to the oft-repeated story that the Republican assemblyman went to the speaker last year to seek advice on whether he should run as an independent. Brown reportedly cautioned him that such a switch prior to the election would be political suicide. "That betrayal is what voters were reacting to," said Brulte.

Democrats conceded that it was an uphill battle from the start. "We did focus groups," Brown told reporters at a luncheon the day after the election. "The consultants told me to keep my money." No message seemed to work. "At times we were chanting, 'flatline, flatline,'" said Giarrizzo, referring to the high-tech, hand-held devices used by focus-group participants to register their responses. And it's not as if the Democrats were blessed with a particularly charismatic candidate to defend. Even Brown admitted that Horcher "was not frankly worth it," adding, "I did what was right on Paul Horcher's behalf."

Horcher won his first election in 1990 in an eight-candidate GOP primary field that included former Congressman and Assemblyman Wayne Grisham. Horcher won with only 18 percent of the vote and only 64 votes ahead of his nearest competitor. He won by outspending other candidates. "His base was quicksand," which contributed to his political vulnerability, according to a San Gabriel Valley Republican activist.

Considered a loner and an iconoclast, Horcher's troubles began in earnest in 1993 when he accepted an appointment from Brown to be vice-chairman of the since-abolished Ways and Means Committee — a post the Republican caucus had agreed should go to then-Assemblyman Dean Andal (R-Stockton). Brown was adamant that his old foe Andal not get the job and had offered it to several other Republicans, all of



Illustrations by Christopher

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whom turned it down. In bucking the wishes of his caucus, Horcher then faced its wrath. He spent the next two years being ostracized and lashing out at the right wing of his party.

Some Republicans tried to convince voters that the Horcher recall had little to do with Paul Horcher and was really a battle over the direction California will take. Brulte said: "The issue is public policy, not who's speaker. Republicans stand for lower taxes, less government regulation, less welfare. Democrats are for higher welfare, higher taxes and regulations." But behind the high-sounding rhetoric, it's clear that the true motive was revenge.

With vengeance taken, Republicans are gearing up for their next recall fight — this time targeting Machado, a moderate Democrat from San Joaquin County. Unlike Horcher, Machado did not switch parties. He was elected as a Democrat and voted for a Democratic speaker. He was targeted because, Republicans say, he wasn't forthright about his loyalty to the speaker. "Machado campaigned saying that he had not committed to voting for Willie Brown," said Don Parsons, the Stockton political consultant running the recall drive. "He knows that if he had campaigned differently, he wouldn't have won." There's only a slight Democratic edge in registration in the 17th District, and Machado beat Republican Ed Simas by a slim 1764-vote margin last November.

But political consultant Richie Ross, charged with defending Machado, said the Republican argument is nonsense. "The Republicans are saying Mike Machado didn't make it clear to voters that he was a Willie Brown Democrat and therefore he should be punished," said Ross, a longtime confidante of the Brown. "In both 1992 and 1994, the Republicans spent hundreds of thousands of dollars telling people Machado was a Willie Brown Democrat. That suggests the money was not well spent."

Furthermore, Ross rejected the notion that this will be a replay of the Horcher recall. "They attacked Horcher for getting elected as a Republican and acting like a Democrat," Ross said. "They are attacking Machado for getting elected as a Democrat and acting like a Democrat."

For his part, Machado said, "The best way to respond is to do the things we talked about doing during the campaigns," like addressing crime, jobs, and education. "They have the right to do it and I put my trust in the voters."

One Republican insider acknowledged the Machado recall will be "a referendum on Willie Brown." Indeed, the recall petition mailers feature two photos of Brown and only one of Machado. But targeting Machado is

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fraught with pitfalls. Now that Brown is no longer speaker, some say the recall will be more difficult. "He's voted for a Democrat for speaker, and now he's voted for a Republican [Doris Allen of Cypress]," noted Tim Clark, an associate of consultant Wayne Johnson, who worked on the Horcher recall. "What grounds do you have to recall him?" But Machado's vote for Allen could cut both ways. The campaign mailer practically writes itself: "He voted for Brown, and then voted for his handpicked successor.". Paradoxically, the Horcher recall itself — by hastening Brown's departure — may deflate enthusiasm for taking Machado out. On the other hand, the Horcher trouncing could embolden Republican partisans.

Meanwhile, a group of Republican partisans — including eight assemblymembers and Andal, now a member of the Board of Equalization — are trying to keep animus toward Willie Brown alive by suing the Assembly over the parliamentary high jinks that Brown pulled in January to retain the speakership (see *CJ*, February 1995). Politically, the lawsuit keeps the Machado recall alive by keeping the specter of Brown before the public — even though he is no longer speaker.

In contrast to the unity that the Horcher recall inspired, some Republican assemblymembers are shying away from the anti-Machado campaign, while others openly criticize it. Brulte has said he won't get involved with efforts to remove Democratic members. Assemblyman Bernie Richter (R-Chico) said, "I've been opposed to it from the very first moment," arguing that Machado is a good agriculture vote on issues like water distribution and pesticides. "The last thing you want to do is drive him into the arms of liberal Democrats."

The Machado recall effort also affects the politics of the state Senate. Senator Rob Hurtt (R-Garden Grove) and the Allied Business PAC have together donated $30,000 to the recall campaign. Assemblyman Larry Bowler (R-Elk Grove) is a prominent spokesman for the cause. Not coincidentally, Bowler and Machado are nested in the Senate district now represented by Democrat Pat Johnston of Stockton. Registration in Johnston's 5th Senate District only marginally favors Democrats, and Johnston is considered vulnerable in the 1996 election. If Bowler is interested in challenging Johnston next year, he could benefit from his role in the Machado recall by raising his profile in that part of the Senate district that he does not represent. Of course, there are risks for Bowler. If the recall fails, Machado could look like a martyr and Bowler a fool and a bully.

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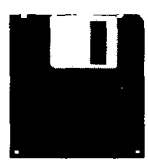

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effort is Andal, who has a long history with Machado. The two squared off in the 1992 elections, when Andal was the incumbent. At the time, Andal was set to become Assembly Republican leader, but Machado actually beat him on Election Day. As a result, the caucus turned to Brulte. Andal eventually defeated Machado after absentee ballots had been tabulated, but the leadership prize — and potentially the speakership — had already slipped away for Andal.

> "Now there's more competition during elections and outside the usual election cycle. It is restoring life and vitality to the Legislature."

At bottom, the Republicans are going after Machado simply because they can. That bodes ill for Democrats in other marginal districts. Mike Schroeder, vice chairman of the California Republican Party, denied that the GOP has declared open season on Democrats who win by narrow margins, but he admitted that "you will see more recalls in marginal districts because this is where people are forced to say what they need to say to get elected." To critics, this shows disregard for the orderly political process. "The Machado recall is a purely opportunistic act," said political scientist Bruce Cain, associate director of the Institute for Governmental Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. "His only crime was winning in a district the Republicans think they should have." Republicans have conceded as much when Hurtt told the *Los Angeles Times*, "We think he's vulnerable. We're going after him, pure and simple."

Enthusiasts say recalls are an important tool of participatory democracy. "The ultimate effect of recalls should be that elected officials pay more attention to their constituents when they cast a vote," Brulte said. Others have noted that recalls merely reflect the wishes of an increasingly volatile electorate. "This is part of a trend that includes Proposition 13, Proposition 187, term limits and the November 1994 Republican landslide," after Democratic gains only two years earlier, said Schroeder. "Recalls won't be unusual in five years."

Claremont McKenna College government professor Alan Heslop added, "Now there's more competition during elections and outside the usual election cycle. It is restoring life and vitality to the Legislature." To those who would argue that recalls don't reflect volatility but rather cause it, Heslop retorted: "What the hell is wrong with volatility? Representative institutions are not supposed to be more stable than the societies they represent. We've been through a period when change was unusual. Earlier in American history, change was more rapid. If we have more change, that's a return to a more small 'd' democratic experience."

But recall critics counter that there is a heavy price to pay for that so-called vitality. "The recall exists for good reason," said Ross, the consultant working for Machado. "But when it's not used for the cause it was intended, it will have a Bosnian effect: perpetual civil war. And to what end?" he wondered, pointing out that, even if the Machado

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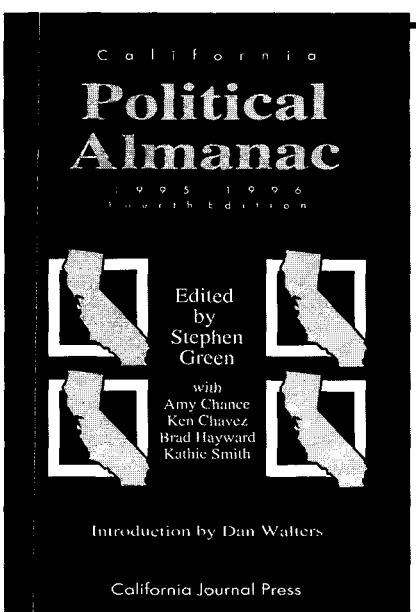

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recall qualifies and succeeds, it will shave only nine legislative months off of its target's two-year term.

"This is clearly an abuse of the process," said Giarrizzo. "Recalls should be for malfeasance or corruption," he added. "Maybe the recall law ought to be looked at and made more definitive." In addition, he said, "Recalls are anti-democratic because they narrow the electorate," pointing out that special, off-year elections often attract low voter turnouts. Turnout in the Horcher recall, for instance, was 33 percent, higher than in an average special election but lower than for a regularly scheduled election. And unlike a normal election, the recall is the only thing on the ballot. "The recall is designed for single-issue enthusiasts because they can maintain their enthusiasm and adrenaline ceaselessly," said former Senator and one-time recall target David Roberti. "Now, you'll be able to veto a full election with a rump election."

The recall law, ushered in during the reformist Progressive Era along with the initiative process, does not say there has to be a specific cause for a recall. "The spirit of direct democracy that ushered in recalls was a good thing," said political scientist Jaime Regalado, executive director of the Edmund G. "Pat" Brown Institute of Public Affairs at California State University, Los Angeles. He warns, however, that recalls could be hijacked by special interests the same way initiatives have. "Now, sometimes avenues of direct democracy don't seem very democratic," he said.

In an era when politicians eschew controversy, the threat of recalls only reinforces that impulse. "Recalls make politicians even more cautious," said Cain. "Occasionally, you'd see some leadership because elected officials would figure that voters would forget one action or look at it in the context of a total record. But now, there's a sense of 'Do one thing and you're out.' Voters don't always look at long-term consequences of a vote." Or, as Brown put it, "Recalls could have a chilling effect on people's ability to be independent."

In the short term, it's clear that recalls are a symptom of another political crisis: the deadlocked Legislature. "They are happening now because there is near-parity between the parties for the first time in a long time, so the stakes become more acute," said Regalado. "The Republicans wouldn't be doing this if they had a seven-seat advantage," added Cain. "So things won't calm down until one party or the other takes control of the Legislature."

But the long-term effects of constant recalls or even merely threats of recalls is yet unknown. And many wonder how state politics will repair itself after the tumult caused by recalls. Schroeder argued that recalls themselves, while initially disruptive, will lead to a more placid political culture. "Politicians have lost the confidence of the voters, and now voters are taking it out on politicians," he said. "Along with term limits, recalls will force politicians to hew more closely to what their constituents want. That will restore confidence among the voters and things will calm down." But others think recalls are more part of the problem and not the solution. As Roberti put it, "Order will only be restored when it becomes so volatile that both sides say, 'This is no way to run government.'"

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Thunder in the

A University of California study on poverty estimates that two million California children are hungry. What happens when that hunger turns to anger, and those children grow up?

By Al Martinez

The year was 1936. I was in the second grade and we were living in a shack on a hillside in East Oakland. It was Thanksgiving. I remember the feelings of festivity in the air, and the good smells that seemed to emanate from the kitchens of others. It didn't come from ours. We were poor, and lived like we were poor. Our shack had no gas and no electricity. It hovered precariously over a steep slope, partially propped up by a single board wedged against a tree. We cooked on a wood stove and lighted the house with kerosene lanterns.

It was the time of the Great Depression, and my angry old stepfather had been out of work for God knows how long, and it gnawed at his soul like a hound of heaven. I remember we were on "relief" and were given occasional handouts of food and clothing by abrupt and harried people at long tables in cold and cavernous buildings.

I hated the grayness of the buildings, the attitudes of the workers and the terrible oppressiveness of those who stood in lines that wound out the door, waiting their turn for food and clothing. Even at age seven, I disliked being there. I could feel the resentment of a relief worker who jammed new shoes on my feet to see if they fit, handling me as though I were less than human, a job he hated that had to be done.

I suppose, in a way, I could have taken all that had it not been for Thanksgiving. I mentioned the smells and the warmth of other households in the neighborhood. No one was rich on Burr Street, but they had somehow managed to put together a holiday dinner. In our house, it was bread and a homemade meatless soup. Even in our terrible poverty, I had somehow expected there would be a Thanksgiving, but there wasn't. The shock of the meager dinner remains etched on my memory. And I think of all the children, in this Golden Age and this Golden State, who are today what I was back then: hungry, angry and terribly sad.

I was reminded of it recently by a report from the University of California, Berkeley, that said

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Al Martinez is an award-winning columnist for the Los Angeles Times *and the author of several books, including a collection of essays published under the title "Ashes in the Rain."*

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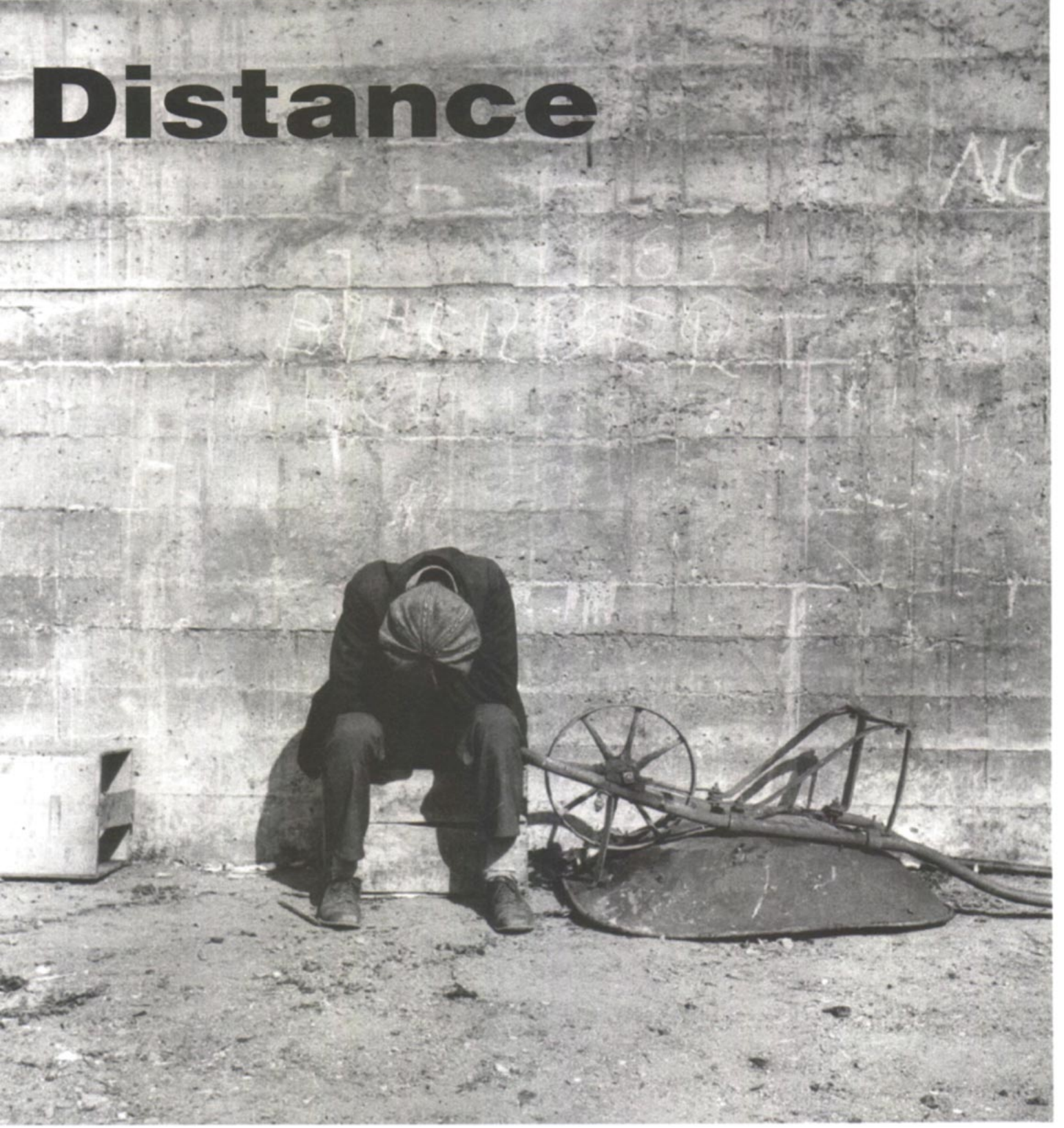
Distance



Man Beside Wheelbarrow

Dorothea Lange, San Francisco, 1934, Courtesy of the Oakland Museum

there are five million hungry people in California, and two million of them are children — enough to create a city more than twice the size of San Francisco. They comprise about 25 percent of all the children in the state up to age 18, a figure that, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, almost doubled in the decade of the 1980s. More children have entered poverty in the past five years than in the previous 20.

We don't always recognize them as poor by their outward appearance. They go to school, play outside and then disappear. Some go to houses, some to trailers and some to the cars or trucks or vans they call home. What awaits them are the kinds of meals that awaited me back

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then, or possibly less. They're what John Steinbeck called the children of fury, pushing at the thin line between hunger and anger.

We are coming full circle in my lifetime from an era of intense privation, through war and full bellies, to a period in which children wonder once more what became of Thanksgiving. The poor, the unseen people, have always been with us, and no doubt always will be, but their ranks, like armies of despair, are steadily growing. The number of Californians living below poverty level rose from 11 percent in 1980 to 18.2 percent in 1993. What makes their existence more painful than ever is a widening gap between the haves and have-nots, bringing into sharper contrast those who sign multimillion dollar contracts for hitting balls and sinking baskets and those with no place to go and nothing to eat.

Social scientist Michael Harrington, acknowledging the invisibility of the poor, observed that "They are not simply neglected and forgotten as in the old rhetoric of reform; what is much worse, they are not seen." And yet, evidence of their existence surfaces occasionally with such poignancy that we can't deny their pain.

I wrote once in my column for the *Los Angeles Times* of my search for a homeless family I had heard of living in a small cluster of trees near a freeway off-ramp. There are about 80,000 homeless people living in Los Angeles County, and I, like most everyone else, had tended to ignore their existence. They were like passing traffic, or leaves carried on a stray breeze, sensed briefly and gone quickly. I wanted to correct my own dispassion by writing about a family I'd been told lived in an encampment at the northern terminus of the Long Beach Freeway. So I went looking.

Neighbors told me they'd been there but had been chased off by the police. I searched the abandoned encampment and found the debris of their existence: a barbecue grill, a paper cup, a few cans, a ragged shirt ... and a note. It was written in black crayon on a piece of lined notebook paper by a child who might have been seven or eight years old. On one side was a picture of a house in rough outline, without doors or windows, standing bleakly alone. On the other, printed with determined care, were the words, "I love you mom."

I looked at that note for a long time, drawn into it by the terrible sadness of its circumstances. I could picture a little girl, the age of my own granddaughters, sitting in that vacant lot, carefully printing the words, and just as meticulously drawing a picture of a home that might have existed in a small corner of her memory. It was a house without her in it, a place beyond the horizons of her reach, cold and distant and empty.

When I think of that child, and of all the children in California whose dreams are trampled by poverty, I wince at

"Thirteen million unemployed fill the cities in the early '30's" **Dorothea Lange, San Francisco, 1934, Courtesy of the Oakland Museum**

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the dogged efforts of those who would deny them assistance in order to drive them away. The passage of Proposition 187 and attacks on welfare, affirmative action and free food programs burn with acrimony bordering on hatred toward the kinds of people who need help the most. Frustrated by growing tax burdens and crushing unemployment, we look around for someone to blame and place it on the shoulders of the poor, whether they are immigrants, the mentally ill we dumped into the streets when we stopped "warehousing" them, or those who forever wander in search of existence.

Poverty isn't always a choice we make by reasons of indolence or the absence of skill. Sometimes it is thrust upon its victims when wars end, government contracts dry up and huge industries move away. We've seen the aerospace plants shut down and General Motors move and a recession-rooted downsizing of businesses from Yreka to San Diego. It all happened for reasons so complex that only a small percentage of the population even begins to understand them. We didn't deliberately add to the problem of poverty, and if you sat down with the guy next door you'd find he hates the idea of people being out of work and kids going hungry.

But poverty in the abstract is something else, and politicians can easily transform the homeless into bums and welfare recipients into leeches as they play upon the fears of a vast middle class to enhance their own positions on the political spectrum. We're going broke, they say, because bums refuse to work; we're going broke because Mexicans are taking our jobs; we're going broke because illegals are burdening our social systems and driving our taxes upward.

They find ready listeners, because many Californians stand a paycheck away from poverty themselves. The same University of California report that found five million Californians hungry found another 8.4 million at risk of being hungry. They're the working poor, to whom a layoff can mean disaster. I saw it happen when the General Motors plant shut down in Van Nuys and 26,000 employees were suddenly out of work. Unexpected illness can similarly wipe out a lifetime of building. I've seen that happen too among those who least expected it.

One of them was Liz McVey.

She was a successful woman in her mid-40s, a restaurateur and the owner of two private detective agencies. A graduate of Bryn Mawr, she was raised in a gray stone mansion in a wealthy section of Chester, Pennsylvania, and numbered the DuPonts among her schoolmates. She came to California in the mid-1950s as an Air Force comptroller, then, intrigued by detective work, earned a private investigator's license. By 1970, she owned two agencies. Such was the success of the agencies that within 10 years she had opened a pair of restaurants. Then the roof fell in.

Business setbacks were followed by a bad fall, followed by a series of illness that kept her hospitalized for seven months. Without medical insurance, her savings disappeared. Lacking the ability to function, her businesses failed. If it is true we are all fate's children, she was selected for punishment beyond reason.

Once out of the hospital, she remained on medication for asthma and diabetes. When I saw her, she was still on oxygen and bedbound. She had no money for food or rent and was about to be evicted from the small Hollywood apartment she occupied alone. "I always wondered why homeless people couldn't just pull themselves up by the bootstraps," she said to me. "I guess I'll find out."

As it turned out, McVey was helped by friends and ultimately gained enough public assistance to get her back on her feet. But this was a university graduate who finally could figure out how to work her way through a maze of bureaucracies to get the help she needed to keep her off the streets. This was a woman with friends.

The five million people in California who live below the poverty level lack the mental resources McVey had. There are damned few university graduates among them, and no friends to extend helping hands. We are their friends. We are their resources. If the California Dream, already blurred, is not to end up as a nightmare, we've got to stop ignoring the armies of despair that occupy our state, and, even more urgently, stop attempting to deprive them of the little they receive from us.

I keep coming back to that Thanksgiving almost 60 years ago and the feelings of hopelessness and despair that poverty created; they are an indelible part of my soul. And I keep coming back to the children of poverty, because by the year 2000 they will be one-third of all the children in California. I grew up in an age relatively free of an inclination toward street violence and found avenues for my rage that were socially acceptable. But this is a different world, a different state, a place that bristles with new armaments and new hatreds, and I can't help but wonder how the anger in the bellies of the children, the sad and hungry kids in the shadows, will react when they're grown up enough to let us know how they feel. I hear thunder in the distance, and wonder when the storm will arrive.

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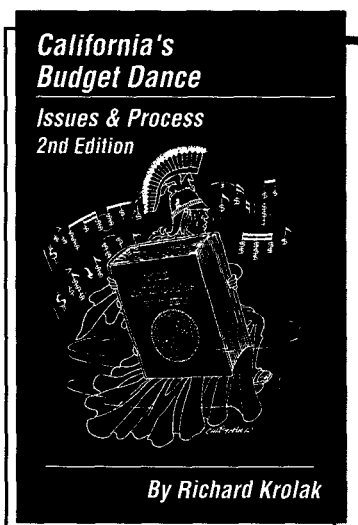

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In search of the California dream

Dreamers aren't cynics, and cynics can't dream

By John Vasconcellos

Never in my 30 years in politics has the California dream more resembled a nightmare. It appears a nightmare from which we have no means of escape: Californians lack a shared dream, and they lack visionary leadership. Our people are confused, frightened, angry. They sense a troubled state, a state that is fiscally bankrupt, socially disintegrating, economically besieged and politically self-destructive. Our search for the California dream is stymied by denial. Problem-solving requires acknowledging crises, identifying causes and adopting curative strategy.

Why are we fiscally bankrupt?

Major developments have converged to cause the fiscal crisis:

- revenue reductions from economic changes such as recession, an end to the Cold War and an expanding global economy;
- expenditure growth for growing populations, including nine million more residents, and an explosion of costly populations, such as children, AIDS patients, seniors and inmates);
- tax reductions.

In the 1994 gubernatorial campaign, neither Governor Pete Wilson nor his challenger, Democrat Kathleen Brown, addressed the fiscal crisis, nor did the media. Instead, the governor, the Legislature and the people enacted a broad "three strikes and you're out" initiative that included those convicted of non-violent felonies, and the potential cost could mean $21 billion to build 40 new prisons and $6.7 billion per year to operate them. A study by the Rand Corporation concluded that all tax revenues from any economic recovery go for prisons, leaving none for the 400,000 additional Californians who will become university-eligible over the next decade. That's no formula for a promising future.

Why have we had a social breakdown?

Every institution --families, schools, health, government, economy --is dysfunctional, leading to widespread dysfunctional behavior: crime, violence, addiction, teen pregnancy, dropouts and illiteracy. Correcting dysfunctions requires tracing sources, and those sources may be found in seven convergent revolutions wracking the state: technology, gender, race, self-esteem, an end to the Cold War, an emergent global economy, and a shift from a manufacturing to an information economy. Each of these revolutions has California roots. Their interaction brings rampant, relentless change and chaos.

Our search for the California dream is stymied by the fantasy hopes of Californians longing for good old orderly days. But Humpty Dumpty is beyond reconstruction. We must stop trying to reverse what's irreversible and instead reframe what's happening. We must recognize that what appears to be a frightening breakdown is an predictable break-up as Californians break out of old confining forms. That provides us with a comforting sense of direction and hope so we can constructively involve ourselves in efforts to secure breakthrough.

To keep pace with chaotic worlds, corporations are going virtual and governments are being reinvented. We must prepare ourselves, reinvent ourselves, become flexible persons.

Why the economic breakdown?

Recent years have brought terrible economic times to California, exacerbated by a loss of 700,000 jobs and a growing population that required 200,000 new jobs each year. The most powerful causes of this dichotomy were an emerging global economy and the expansion of the age of technology. We can't move forward in this kind of world by preserving our past. We must look forward to recover prosperity.

Why have we suffered a political breakdown?

The political breakdown is our most painful and most damaging. Politics serves as our effort to improve our lives and

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Assemblyman John Vasconcellos is a veteran Democratic lawmaker from San Jose and chairman of the Assembly Budget Committee.

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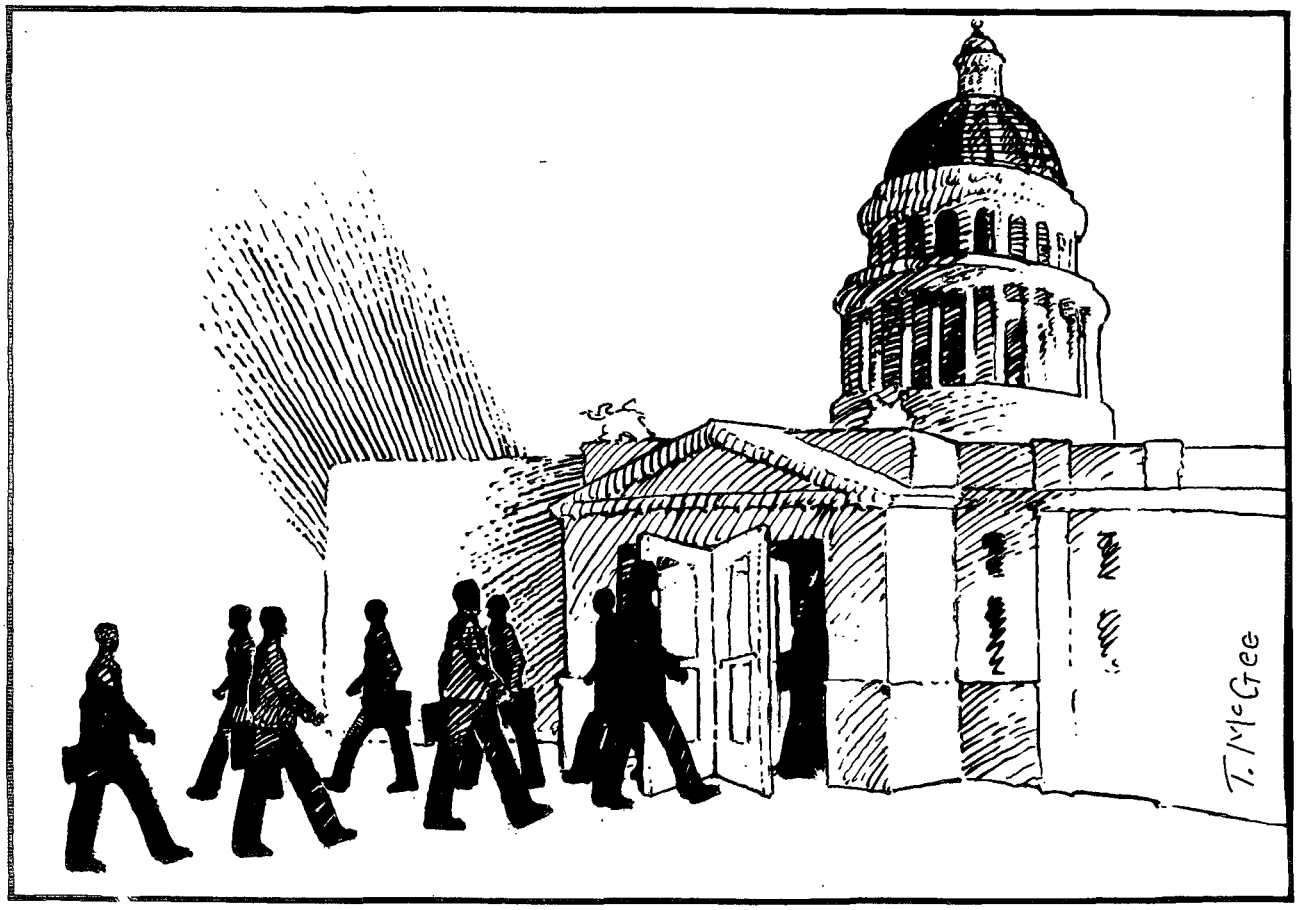

Illustration by Tom McGee, California Journal, *June 1986*

future. The breakdown is evidenced by recent campaigns — the most negative, divisive and disaffecting in history. The results: only 38 percent of the eligible citizens bothered to vote.

A friend said after the 1994 primary: "Wilson, Brown, Feinstein, Huffington spent $20 million; nobody gives a f—k what they said." After November's election, that $20 million had ballooned to $100 million, and "nobody gives a f—k." No inspiration, no education, no healing, no hope.

Trace this political meltdown to six causes:

• Our experiencing "raging chaos." Revolutions move us into unfamiliar territory, unsettling us, and we're vulnerable to manipulation and demagoguery.

• Our personal fear of freedom, staring us in our faces through the liberation and human growth movements of 1960s.

• Decades of increasingly negative campaigning that has eroded faith and trust — essential grounds for believing in and participating in democracy.

• Money and television have created a discouraging duo that has reduced the substance of problems to bumper-sized bites.

• Political demagogues, in the form of consultants and candidates, have preyed on our vulnerability, dividing to conquer us.

• Cynicism has become the negative vision of human nature.

California is becoming ungovernable, and 13 co-conspirators have created the problem: citizens, candidates, consultants, pollsters, the media, talk radio, the Capitol culture, pompous conservatism, the obstructionist right, the elitist left, the fundamentalist right, leaders and the cynical culture.

How do we deal with this predicament?

Indicting the past and casting about to blame someone isn't enough. We must assume responsibility, commit ourselves to a strategic action plan for overcoming our crises. What recovery program heals our dysfunctions? Not traditional politics. Major parties are doubly obsolete. Alvin Toffler, writing in the *Wall Street Journal,* traced our political paralysis to parties arguing an obsolete economic paradigm — manufacturing products — while we've moved fast-forward into an economy of information and services. Both parties also argue an obsolete psychological paradigm — evil human nature — as many of us grow fast-forward into a faithful, self-esteeming culture. We're searching for the California dream through a rear view mirror, while common sense instructs us to look ahead.

Recent elections occasioned a turning point in our search for the California dream, a window of opportunity to generate a new kind of politics. No sane individual can be proud or satisfied with recent election campaigns, nor our record of problem-solving. We must convert disgust with traditional politics into 21st century politics. We can begin by recognizing our place in history. Our creativity generated seven revolutions radically changing our world. We now must shift our basic sense of ourselves from negative to positive and grow to believe that humans are innately inclined toward becoming life-affirming, constructive, responsible and trustworthy. Institutions break down as they treat us otherwise.

We're into unfamiliar territory, for the first time free of institutional dictates. Frightened by that prospect, we're also susceptible to manipulation.

Our capacities to lead constructive lives are atrophied and need healing. We must commit to healing ourselves and leading lives of integrity. And we must begin by recognizing that:

• Each of us is always a politician. How we present

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ourselves determines whether we will encourage or discourage each other;

• The politics I do is who I am. My lived sense of myself determines my vision, values, programs and politics.

California's over-arching challenge is realizing the promise of our multicultural democracy in a global economy and in the age of technology. Toward that end, we must create faithful, loving, hopeful, healing, 2lst century politics. Everyone is searching for the new political center, but one component runs through our troubles — our cynicism. The antidote is faithfulness. Instead of the politics of cynicism, we need the politics of faith. Instead of fear, we must create the politics of hope. Instead of hate, we must live the politics of love. Instead of alienation and division, we must generate the politics of healing, thus unifying California.

To achieve this successful personal politics, we must develop eight interdependent components: a founding vision; philosophical principles; a practical problem-solving agenda; a whole-hearted personal commitment; uplifting campaign methodology; a high-tech capacity for communicating and participating; a strategic action plan; and inspiring leadership.

This new kind of politics is distinguished by foundational vision: humans are innately inclined toward becoming life-affirming, constructive, responsible and trustworthy. That vision informs and transforms every aspect of politics; encouragment and empowerment, rather than discouragment and control, become the new calculus. The politics of fear-mongering and finger-pointing can't solve problems, but the politics of personal responsibility, interpersonal trust, collaboration and community can.

Self-esteem and not shame becomes key to developing a healthy individuality, community, freedom, responsibility, creativity and productivity. Faithful vision generates a 2lst century political platform, a recovery program curing our most critical dysfunctions:

• education, from teaching to learning;

• public safety, from punishment to prevention;

• economic development, from competition to collaboration;

• governance, from special to public interest.

Searching for the California dream, and for 21st century politics, ultimately brings us back to trusting ourselves and trusting each other. It requires enlisting ourselves faithfully, whole-heartedly and enduringly in the implementation of a strategic plan and in sustained action.

California is watched, and the California dream yearned for, by people everywhere. California is the human frontier, the human laboratory. We must not fail them.

This revolution won't come easy and isn't for the faint of heart.

California is home for dreamers, leading to opportunities we've consistently created for improving our lives and future. Let's commit to becoming fine citizens, active members of our community, activists for 21st century politics. Mobilize everyone who shares the faithful vision of human nature into a committed network. Only cynicism keeps us from recreating our California dream, from living dream into reality. Let's lead heroic lives in search of the Caliifornia dream.

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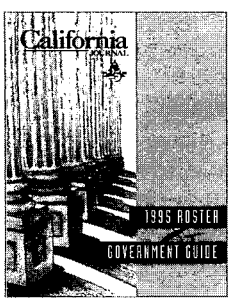

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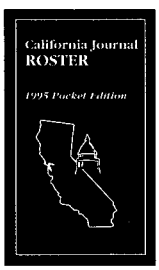

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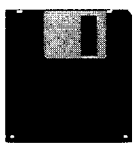

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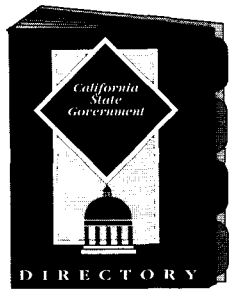

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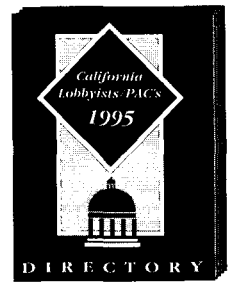

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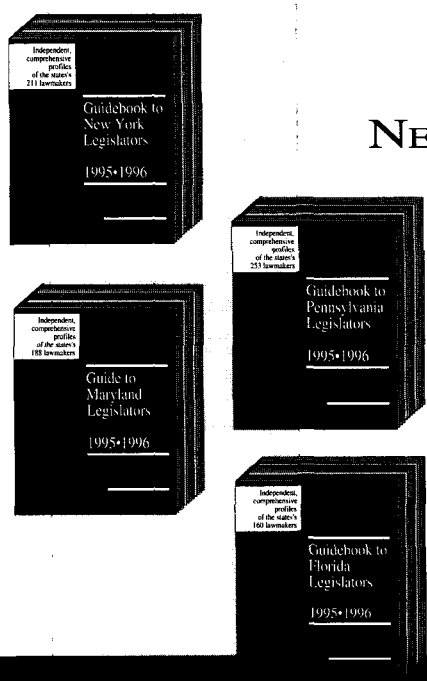
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What welfare

Like the rest of America, California has made it too easy to live on the dole, and the result is a vast underclass that no longer values work, responsibility — or itself.

By Larry P. Arnn and Thomas G. West

What should be the welfare system of California 25 years from now? A system that is local in administration. This new system must support family and work. It must respect marriage, disdain illegitimacy and distinguish the deserving poor from the pretenders. It must rely in large part upon the initiative of private parties and organizations; in other words it must be again a system of charity and not of interest-group driven public policy. In short, it must be everything that the current system is not. It must be fair and good.

During the 1960s, '70s and '80s the public debate over welfare consisted mostly of money talk. Can we afford welfare? Who should have to pay for it? Much, however, has changed over the past decade. Now, thanks to the accumulation of bad experience, and the clear heads of a wise few, we are reaching to the fundamentals. We see now that a vast treasure of ill-targeted relief has bought us only more misery. We see that the poor have been hurt even more than the taxpayer has been bilked. We see that this kind of compassion is an impostor. We see that the real article is urgently required, but it can be obtained only if simple justice is secured at the same time.

Between 1960 and 1990, government welfare spending increased from about $30 billion (measured in 1990 dollars) to $225 billion per year; an increase of 750 percent. California is most profligate. As of 1993, California accounted for 27 percent of all nationwide spending for Aid to Families With Dependent Children — the most prominent welfare program. That is more than double the average per capita for the nation. The reasons for this dependency are many and complicated, but consider that in 1992 a welfare mother of two living in California with a Section 8 housing voucher from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development had a tax-free equivalent income of $1817 per month, or $21,804 per year. This more than twice the after-tax amount she could have earned at a fulltime minimum-wage job. Why should she work when government's misplaced generosity prices work out of the market?

Despite tens of thousands of government clerks deploying a sizable portion of the world's

Larry P. Arnn is president of the Claremont Institute in Claremont, California. Thomas G. West is a professor of politics at the University of Dallas and a senior fellow at the institute.

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Photos by Rich Pedroncelli

largest economy for 30 years, the percentage of poor Americans has not been reduced since modern welfare began in the mid-1960s. On the contrary, these programs have worked against economic growth and opportunity for the poor. Before the big increases in welfare spending during the 1960s, the poverty level had actually been declining rapidly. According to government figures, 36 percent of Americans were poor in 1950. By 1965, that figure had declined to 14 percent, which is about where it has stubbornly remained ever since.

The stubborn immobility of the poverty numbers is bad enough, but it is not the worst. The nature of poverty has insidiously changed. Prior to the 1960s, most poor Americans were poor because their work brought them a paltry income. But since the mid '60s there has been a sharp and ominous increase of social pathology in urban, welfare-infested communities. Poverty has increasingly become a problem stemming from a new underclass of able-bodied people who work rarely or not at all. Many of them, especially males, frankly reject the qualities that most Americans admire: self-control, sobriety, hard work, loyalty, courage, fair play and faith in God.

The new underclass, mired in government dependency, rejects the ethic of hard work and self-reliance. Low-paying jobs — where many Americans have traditionally learned the basic skills of showing up on time and getting the job done — are scorned. The underclass regards these jobs as "dead-end" and their pay as "chump change." For this urban underclass, many of whom have spent carefree years not working, hanging around smoking reefer and drinking 40-ounce beers, the reality of trying to hold down a regular job is too much. Among this underclass, the majority sneers at those who cultivate moral qualities in themselves or their children. In this world, the drug-dealing thug is lionized, and the man who sweeps floors is scorned. Welfare has taught our poor all the wrong lessons.

If today's welfare policies are not working, what then is the alternative? Prior to the new, post-1965 approach, America had the most successful poverty program in history. Two centuries ago, at least 90 percent of Americans were desperately poor by today's standards. By the 1960s, a majority of Americans had moved into the middle class. The recipe for America's successful 189-year-long poverty program was simple: establish free markets and opportunity for all who can work; provide strong governmental support for the traditional family and for a morality of self-control, industriousness and basic decency; and provide individual support in local communities for the deserving poor (orphans, the elderly, and disabled), and temporarily for the wayward able who desire to pull themselves out from poverty.

Let us assume that the federal government is acting on the new prevailing intellectual consensus about poverty programs by handing over to states the authority to set and administer their own assistance programs for the poor. With that in mind, here are characteristics of programs and ideas that can help not only California, but all state and local governments in the transition away from the disastrous federal welfare state:

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• Political and community leaders should again talk candidly about virtue, vice and shame. We know destructive and immoral conduct when we see it. Its carnage is all around us, and there is no reason to refrain from pointing out the truth. One of the most frustrating problems in trying to resolve the current poverty question, as *Newsweek* pointed out in a cover story last fall, is the fact that "shame" has all but disappeared from American society. Thirty years ago, it was considered shameful to be on the government dole. But beginning in the '60s, Marvin Olasky points out in *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, the poor were taught by welfare organizers that welfare is "nothing to be ashamed of." Before that, he says, poor mothers had "a sense that welfare should be avoided." But, "the constant repetition of rights got through." The result was "a changing outlook among many poor and the near poor." The deceptive notion that there was "dignity" in accepting government aid was widely promulgated in these years. Accordingly, within a few years a much larger proportion of those eligible for welfare chose to take advantage of it.

• When the stigma of bearing fatherless children and the stigma of accepting handouts is lost, so then is much of the self-reliant spirit and the family integrity that it takes for people to pull themselves out of poverty. Society must not be afraid to cast shame upon laziness, and leaders must affirm with renewed vigilance the duties and responsibilities of citizenship: hard work, honesty, duty to family and self-sufficiency.

Understand that fatherlessness is the central social problem of our time. It is, in fact, the key to solving poverty and crime problems. While we know children do better with a father at home, and while it is damaging for a child to grow up without one, an almost incomprehensible disaster happens when an entire generation of young people grows up in neighborhoods substantially devoid of fathers or responsible males. As of 1994, the illegitimacy rate among African-Americans was 68 percent. But in certain welfare-infested inner city neighborhoods, 80 percent of children are growing up in fatherless homes.

The problem, however, has spread far beyond the inner city. In his incisive new book *Fatherless America*, David Blankenhorn points out that, "Tonight, about 40 percent of American children will go to sleep in homes in which their fathers do not live. ...Fatherlessness," says Blankenhorn, "is the engine driving our most urgent social problems, from crime to adolescent pregnancy. ...A blizzard of statistics and studies confirms the relationship between fatherlessness and child poverty." These studies indicate that in married-couple homes as of 1992, 13 percent of all children under the age of six lived in poverty; while in single-mother homes, a deplorable 66 percent of children lived in poverty.

The federal welfare system is partly to blame. Welfare cash payments usurp a man's traditional role as provider; they make the struggling male breadwinner superfluous, emasculating him. His response is predictable. He turns to the masculine world of the streets: drinking, gang banging, drugs, male camaraderie and crime. The dissolution of the ties that bind men to their children explains much of today's rampant pathology, from the city streets to small towns all across America.

Cash payments to underage girls who decide to have children without bothering to get married put the government in the indefensible position of encouraging reckless sexual behavior and illegitimate births. Laws supporting family integrity need strengthening. There should be firm public endorsement of healthy families, consisting of a married father and mother raising their own offspring. Divorce should be made more difficult; and so-called alternative lifestyles should be treated with the contempt they deserve for damaging our children's well-being.

• A serious response to the crime that plagues poor neighborhoods is required forthwith. In the urban quagmire that now traps most of the poor, there is a clear and present need for an efficient system of arrest, prosecution, trial (not plea bargains), rigorous adherence to stiff sentencing, a crackdown on youth violence and imprisonment for the first violent offense.

The most pressing purpose of government is to protect life, liberty and property. That purpose is subverted daily and pervasively in every major city in America, where flagrant piracy is a way of life. The law-abiding poor need protection more urgently than the law-abiding middle class, who always

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have the option of moving to a safer neighborhood.

• The failure of public schools must be acknowledged and repaired. In the immediate term, tax credits or vouchers for school expenses would instantly enable the poor to send their children to private schools, something that is an affordable option today only for the middle class and the wealthy. In the longer term, public schools need radical overhaul. Control over schools should be returned to local communities, and large numbers of administrative positions should be canceled.

• Private charity must be supported and not supplanted by the government welfare system. In the current "division of labor" in welfare, private charities provide few "on-line services," which means giving direct help to the needy. That job is done by government. Private action is forced to the sidelines, where it spends its time conducting experiments, running model programs, and giving expert advice to the government. Charity or philanthropy had flourished in America as nowhere else. We should strengthen and liberate it. We should invest it with the responsibility to do the main work.

• Separate the deserving poor from the lazy at the local level — make welfare less generous and more burdensome. In *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, Olasky describes how local assistance programs in the 19th century separated the "idle" from the "truly needy" by using "work tests" to discern the character of those seeking assistance. Charities and shelters had "wood yards" attached to their property, and "Transients willing to chop were given two meals and a nights lodging." Not surprisingly, a commentator in 1894 noted that, "when the managers of a Boston charity attached a wood-yard and announced that relief would be given to no able-bodied man, unless willing to do a certain amount of work, the daily number of applicants fell off at once from 160 to 49." Today, and in the future, of course, the wood yard would be some variation on "workfare," but the idea remains the same: to provide basic sustenance consistent with the apostle Paul's commonsense injunction, that able-bodied men who do not work are not entitled to eat.

The first steps in replacing the welfare mess should focus on turning assistance into a temporary safety-net instead of the entrapping spider web it is today. For instance, people in dire need whose families cannot help them should have to live in local communal arrangements, with requirements for long hours of work, and with strict rules of behavior (no overnight guests for the unmarried), instead of giving them free money, free apartments and a free license for irresponsibility. Getting tough on dependency is the only solution. Benjamin Franklin said of welfare, "I am for doing good to the poor, but I differ in opinion of the means. I think the best way of doing good to the poor is not making them easy in poverty, but leading or driving them out of it."

We in California need to discover once again, as America once knew well, that true compassion calls for treating the able-bodied poor as adults with souls rather that as mindless children who will never grow up.

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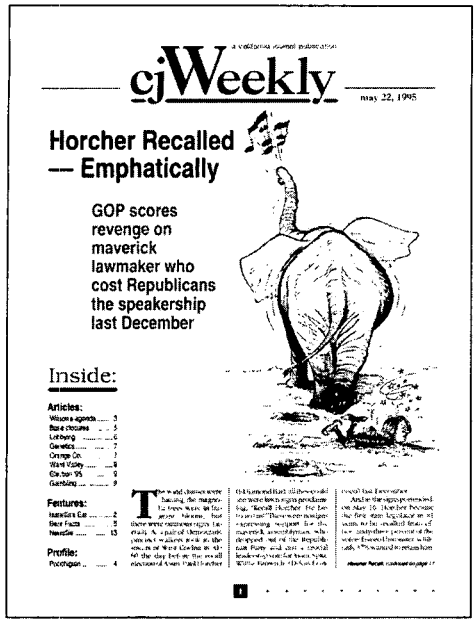

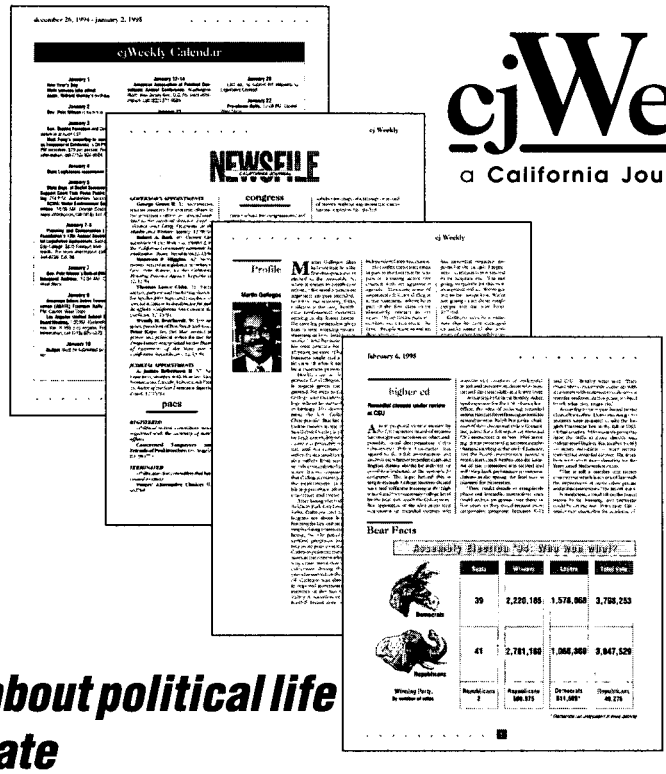

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Soapbox
OPINION

by Brad Shinn

The struggle over water

Marc Reisner put it best in his recent essay, "Farmers vs. Cities" (see *CJ*, May 1995): For most Californians, "farmland is something you drive through on your way to work." Looking through a window at 55 mph, it's hard to feel a connection to agriculture, let alone understand the necessity for something you can't imagine is relevant to your way of life. Reisner really is saying that there is a communication gap between the urban public and agriculture, and someone needs to fill it.

Soon after World War II, Californians grew increasingly isolated from agriculture. In time, this fracture has widened the gap of knowledge and opinion between agricuturalists and consumers. Now, neither understands the other, and both share unfamiliarity and animosity toward one another.

Today's water-supply struggle is more about this alienation than about political clout. California's urban public is constantly bombarded by messages that reinforce its perception about agriculture. Statements like "agriculture uses 80 percent of the state's water" or "growing monsoon crops in a desert" are not only factually inaccurate, but often irrelevant. Still, they effectively sway public opinion.

In opinion surveys, the public believes that for nearly every environmentally insensitive farming practice, there is an alternative available. But they also believe that farmers are unwilling to implement them. Analyses of these opinions show a disconnection between the public's view of what happens on the farm and what *actually* happens on the farm.

For too long, agriculture has left to chance the job of communicating who it is and how it works. The result has been that social commentators like Reisner have defined what agriculture is and does for the majority of the public.

That agriculture does a good job of communicating with itself has become cliche to many insiders. But to communicate to those unfamiliar with the industry is almost foreign. Industry leaders are learning, however, from several successful examples that sharing their insight with outsiders is vital to their existence. But if familiarity is the key to creating the urban-agriculture connection, then agriculture itself is in the best position to help fellow Californians understand the industry.

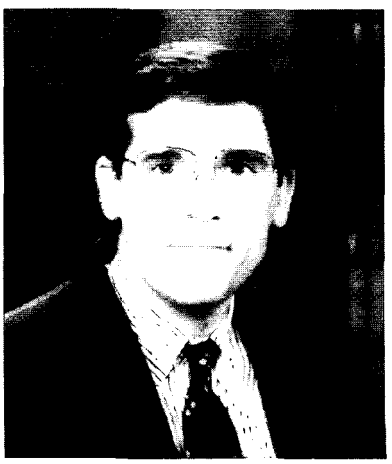
First, it's helpful to acknowledge that agriculture's water use hasn't always been the most efficient, and still isn't in a small minority of instances. There have been astonishing advances in water-application technology over the past 15 years. The nearly $300 million that farmers invest per year in this technology indicates substantial changes have been made.

Second, it is critical to understand that agriculture is a water-intensive undertaking, with physical limitations on its overall efficiency. Crops are not always efficient in the ways we need them to be. There is a limit to the amount of water a farmer can conserve and still produce a crop. If we want agriculture to be a part of California, then we have to accept a minimum level of inefficiency.

That doesn't include wanton waste. Most agricultural water users simply cannot afford the loss of water to a purely non-beneficial use. In fact, most districts slap farmers with heavy fines for even accidental water wasting. While most can see the comparatively bright example of flooded roads, the line of efficient water use blurs when the topic turns to specific irrigation methods. Suffice to say that as long as agricultural water prices continue to rise and the amount of water to irrigate available land is inadequate, farmers will face extreme pressure to avoid wasting water.

Which reduces the debate to the most important of all questions: What is the connection between agriculture and consumers? With $20 billion in direct output, agriculture is the state's third-largest economic contributor. It accounts for nearly one out of every 10 jobs and provides habitat for wildlife, namely waterfowl. For most of us, the obvious link is found in the grocery store in the form of food and in the department store in form of clothes. What isn't obvious is that only a reliable supply of water can sustain this bridge.

By admitting the missteps of the past, moving to implement sensible, progressive alternatives, and communicating squarely what is possible and the consequences they entail, agriculture is re-establishing the vital link between the everyday lives of people and agriculture. It is a slow process, one made worse by years of neglect. But this communication lapse does not mean that agriculture has ignored its duty to use natural resources wisely.



Brad Shinn is executive director of the California Farm Water Coalition.

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By Sherry Bebitch Jeffe

Politics and the poor

At every level of California government, two irresistible forces drive the policy process: budget politics and electoral politics. And the machinations of state and federal budget–writers in this anti–tax, anti–spending climate have local political consequences.

Consider the case of Los Angeles County. It is the nation's most populous county, larger than 43 states. In the last decade, a stream of new immigrants, largely Asian and Latino, added about 1.4 million people to its population. Anglos now comprise nearly 41 percent of the population, Hispanics about 40 percent. African-Americans and Asians account for approximately 20 percent. Yet, for most of its modern history, the county's Board of Supervisors consisted of white males — the "five little kings," as they were called.

Throughout the 1980s, conservative Republicans held sway on the board, despite the county's Democratic registration edge. Then the federal Department of Justice and civil–rights groups successfully sued Los Angeles County, charging that the all–white, male board violated the federal Voting Rights Act and diluted Latino political clout by dividing that community up among three districts. In 1991 Los Angeles City Councilwoman Gloria Molina, a Latina, won a special election in a newly–reapportioned supervisorial district, and the balance of power shifted back to liberals on the board.

With Democrats in the majority, prospects looked brighter for funding social services and supporting programs of importance to minority and urban constituencies. After all, isn't that what taking political control is all about?

Not when the state and the county are in the middle of a dire recession, which sees the county budget grow tighter, the need for human services escalate and financially–strapped Los Angeles County face a $600 million–plus budget deficit this fiscal year.

Not when Republican Governor Pete Wilson initiates a "realignment" of government services between state and local governments, and then raids the county's already–anemic property tax revenues to help fund education and cover state budget deficits.

Not when the new Republican majority in Congress champions a similar shift in responsibility for expensive health and welfare programs from federal to state and local governments, and limits the dollar amount of support available to fund them.

Not when state law requires the county to be the provider of last resort for services for constituencies — the young, the poor, the ill and homeless — which traditionally have been of concern to Democrats, and federal and state reforms threaten to "dump" program costs on the county. As Democratic Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky put it, "The county doesn't have the wherewithal to substitute for federal and state assistance to the poor." And the poor don't have the political clout to force any government to come up with the money.

The county's general relief program has already cost the county about $210 million this fiscal year. It is one of the largest uses of county general fund revenues — along with the Sheriff's Department and Health Services. Because voters' fear of crime is still a potent issue, the Sheriff's Department is better protected politically. And health services, which are already pinched, have active constituencies at work in Sacramento and Washington.

So last month, supervisors moved to pare the budget by seeking welfare reforms which would allow the board greater discretion in determining who receives general relief aid from the county. On a three–to–two vote, with Yaroslavsky joining conservative Republicans Deane Dana and Mike Antonovich in the majority, the supervisors voted to request approval to deny relief to legal immigrants affected by proposed federal welfare reforms. Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, an African–American Democrat who represents a heavily minority district, joined Supervisor Molina in voting "no."

Other proposals to reform the county's general relief program — including restrictions on type of aid and qualified applicants — passed on four–to–one votes, with only Molina opposed. This fraying of the liberal coalition reflects the politics of the "Two Californias," which pit the mostly minority, service–needing, low-voting "have nots" against the current electoral clout of mostly Anglo, anti–government, anti–tax, "haves."

Yaroslavsky's district is not as liberal or as urban–oriented as his Democratic predecessor's was. In addition to the Democratic Westside, Yaroslavsky has more San Fernando Valley homeowners and moderate–to–conservative swing voters to satisfy. That puts him at odds with Molina and her inner-city constituents. Burke owes her election to the Anglo electorate and moderate–to–conservative African–Americans who are the high–propensity voters in her district. And that is reflected in her eclectic positioning on issues surrounding welfare reform.

But the bottom line is that Democrats like Yaroslavsky and Burke are where they are because they have no choice. The bipartisan decision to rein in welfare costs stems from an understanding that to continue the status quo is both a political risk and a fiscal one. Conservatives and liberals alike have raised the specter of Orange County. Antonovich calls the proposals to restrict welfare "a necessary step toward averting bankruptcy for the county." Yaroslavsky insists that if Los Angeles County suffers "a fiscal and human services fiasco" it "will be an international story that no incumbent ... wants to see."

Paraphrasing a line from the Broadway musical, "Man of LaMancha," Yaroslavsky put the tension between budget politics and electoral politics into clear perspective: "Whether the stone hits the pitcher or the pitcher hits the stone, it's bad for the pitcher." The "stone," he explained, is "the county's fiscal ruin." And the pitcher? "The governor, the president, the Board of Supervisors, incumbent senators and congresspeople."

Indeed, elected officials up and down the line should have learned a long time ago that when those two irresistible forces — budget politics and electoral politics — collide, something's gotta give. Now they may be learning the more painful lesson that the "something" which gives could well be their own political careers.

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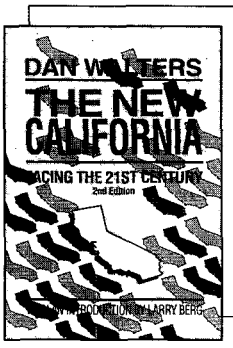

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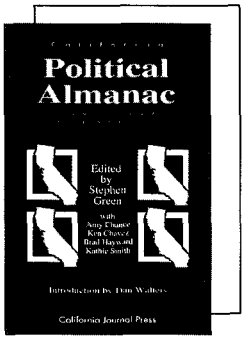

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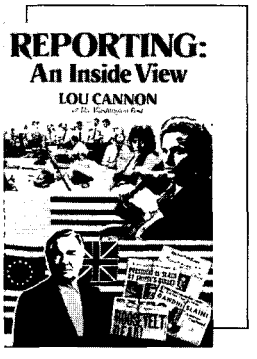

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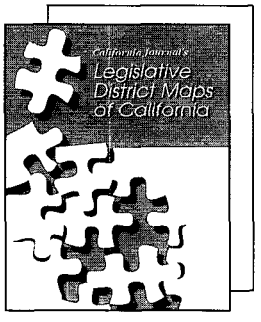

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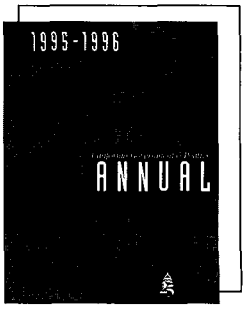

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Washington Notes

PERSPECTIVE

By Meredith K. Wadman

An independent commission

Two years ago, President Bill Clinton stood on the Oakland waterfront and declared the East Bay — then reeling from five major military base closures — a prototype for "military conversion." He came with a one–dollar yearly lease that allowed the Oakland port to expand onto the nearby Naval Supply Center, virtually for free.

"I MAKE THIS PLEDGE TO YOU," HE SAID. "THE MEN and women who won the Cold War will not be left out in the cold by a grateful nation."

Nor by a grateful president.

There is no state that Clinton needs more than California if he is to win a second term in the White House. And eight major bases have already been closed in the state under Clinton's watch. So it came as no surprise this winter when Navy Secretary John Dalton also steamed to the city's rescue, removing the supply center from a list of bases the Navy proposed closing.

At the same time, Army Secretary Togo West killed his service's plans to close the neighboring Oakland Army Base. And the U.S. Air Force dropped plans to close McClellan Air Force base, near Sacramento.

When the Pentagon's list was finally released February 28, 1995, it targeted just one major state base: the Long Beach Naval Shipyard.

Enter the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

In one day — May 10th — the independent eight–member panel undid all that good work and effort on the part of the administration by adding all three northern California bases, and four others in the state, to the list it is considering for closure. That brought to 24,000 the number of California jobs threatened in this round of closures. Eighty percent of them are the civilian jobs whose loss hurts communities most.

The commission may or may not approve all of the closures when it meets for five days of final votes beginning June 22nd. If it does, it would eliminate the Long Beach facility, with over 4000 jobs; the Oakland Army Base, with more than 2200 jobs; McClellan, with over 11,600 jobs; the Oakland Naval Supply Center, with about 1400 jobs; Sunnyvale's Onizuka Air Station, with almost 1900 jobs; and 14 smaller bases with a total of about 3000 jobs. Much of the Point Mugu Naval Air Warfare Center near Oxnard would also close, putting 3,500 civilian jobs at risk, the Navy says. But 3,100 of those would move to a similar base at China Lake in the Mojave Desert. These losses would come on top of more than 26,000 civilian jobs eliminated at 22 state bases since the first of four base–closure rounds began in 1988.

The evident economic pain aside, the events of May 10th show the process is working. Congress purposely insulated the commission from politics. The Pentagon produces a list. The panel can add or subtract bases. And the president and Congress can't fiddle with the results. They must say "yes" or "no" to the entire package. And they have never said "no."

But there's one problem, as evidenced above. The politics now have simply gone underground — or, more accurately, to the Pentagon.

"That's what this base–closure law has done," says Paul Taibl, an analyst with Business Executives for National Security. "Most of the real politicking goes on behind closed doors, before the Pentagon's list ever comes out."

So the panel did the right thing May 10th by moving to undo the studied moves of Pentagon brass — who, after all, rely for their jobs on a president who badly needs California's 54 electoral votes.

Take, for instance, the case of the Oakland Army Base.

It was originally recommended for closure by an Army team in late December. The Army group had decided that commercial ports could do the job of the 54–year–old base. But Secretary West removed it from the list. Since then, the Pentagon has consistently and vehemently declared that the base is an indispensable staging point for supplies in the event of war in the Pacific.

Experts have other thoughts.

"Why was Oakland spared? California is a very critical state for the president to get re–elected," says Lawrence Korb, a Pentagon official in the Reagan administration who now is a defense analyst at the liberal Brookings Institution.

Whatever their own thoughts on the matter, commissioners impassively added the base to the list by a 7–to–1 vote, apparently not swayed by arguments from Commissioner Rebecca Cox that they were making the decision blindly.

Their sympathies for three smaller Bay Area Navy bases, and another in Corona, were no greater. The bases originally had been Navy targets. But Dalton told the commission in March that he spared the bases to avoid economic pain in California. The General Accounting Office took him to task in its April report on the closure list. And the commission added the bases — which include the Oakland Supply Center — to the list.

But the case of McClellan Air Force Base may say the most about the panel's non–partisanship. The base houses one of five key Air Force "depots" — sophisticated repair and maintenance centers that are searching for meaning in the post-Cold War world. The Air Force had admitted that it had more depots than it needs — McClellan, for instance, is operating at 41 percent of its potential. Both McClellan and Kelly Air Force Base, in electorally rich Texas, were reportedly on an early list of Air Force targets. Their military values were middling. But the Air Force decided that it would be cheaper to keep all five depots open and "downsize in place," rather than close any depots outright.

THE GAO WENT AFTER THE AIR FORCE IN ITS REPORT. And the panel added all five depots to the list May 10th. Insiders now say that either McClellan or Kelly will get the ax.

While the commission's not perfect, it's obviously intent on doing the job it's supposed to. And Californians will have to live with the consequences.

Meredith Wadman is Washington correspondent for The Oakland Tribune *and The Alameda Newspaper Group.*

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Reshaping Health Care in America

Dr. Walter Broadnax, deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, delivered the keynote address at the 1993 California Public Affairs Forum.

Searching for a Cure

Dismayed by skyrocketing costs and a lack of universal coverage, Americans have made reforming their health care system a top priority. But achieving consensus on a plan of reform is not easy.

That's why the California Public Affairs Forum recently convened a panel of experts to study this issue. The forum is a biennial event sponsored jointly by the California Chamber of Commerce, the Bay Area Council, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce and Hitachi, Ltd. Its purpose is to provide a forum for discussion of important issues facing California and the nation. Begun in 1987, the forums have examined state transportation problems, the jobs/housing balance, air quality control, and education reform.

No one on the panel questioned the need for health care reform. "The medical treatment that people in this country get is probably the best in the world. But it costs too much and anywhere from 34 to 37 million of us are not covered," said John Palmer, White House correspondent for Christian Science Monitor radio.

"We have in this country a moral imperative to secure health care for everyone," said Dr. Paul F. Griner, president of the American College of Physicians.

Dr. Griner and the other panelists agree that a national health care system is key to controlling runaway health care costs and eliminating the inequities in the current system. They are optimistic that the U.S. will ultimately adopt such a plan.

Fueling the panel's optimism are signs that many Americans are changing their attitudes about health care. "Health care reform has already begun in this country," said Ms. Julia Thomas, president and CEO of Bobrow / Thomas and Associates, an architectural firm that specializes in health care facilities design. "We've seen a huge move toward managed care, preventive care, and a more educated consumer."

"Health care reform is of great interest to us," said Yoshiro Kuwata, a director of Hitachi. "As an employer of more than 16,000 Americans, we are bound to feel the impact of any change in the nation's health care system."

Dr. Paul F. Griner, president of the American College of Physicians

We at Hitachi share the panel's optimism about the future of health care in the U.S. We are proud to play a role in providing a forum for discussion of issues facing us all.

To obtain copies of the speakers' presentations, please write: Hitachi, P.O. Box 35146, Los Angeles, CA 90035.

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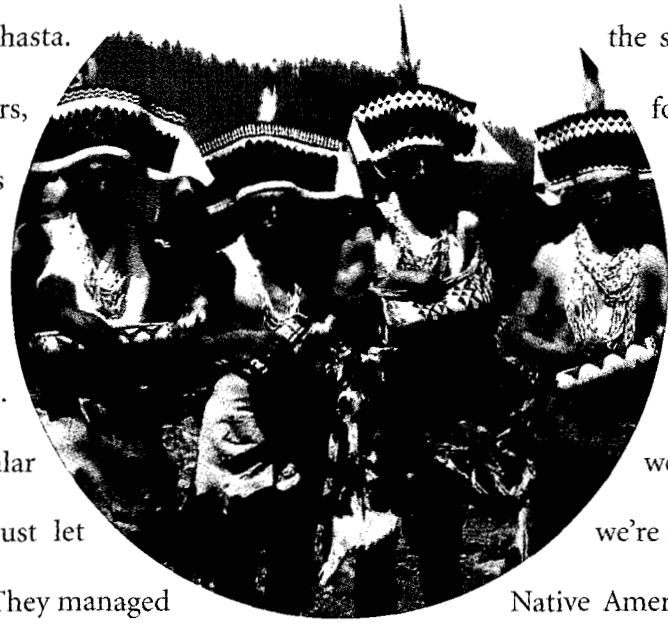
Meet California's first forest management team.



Hupa. Yurok. Tolowa. Shasta. For thousands of years, Native American tribes lived in harmony with nature in California's forests and grasslands. But contrary to popular opinion, they didn't just let nature take its course. They managed the forests with fire, burning them to clear brush, thin stands of trees and replenish the soil. That changed when European settlers arrived. To them, forests were a source of building material and fuel. Fire threatened to destroy those resources, and was constantly suppressed. Ironically, by preventing the small fires that kept the forests clear, the settlers got what they feared most: wildly destructive fires fed by forests thick with dead and weakened trees. Today, we're returning to some of the Native American ways in our managed forests by selectively thinning trees to help balance the needs of nature with the need to supply Californians with the products they use. And to make sure there will always be plenty of trees, we give nature a hand by planting millions of seedlings every year. To find out more about how we're doing, call 916.568.1141.

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